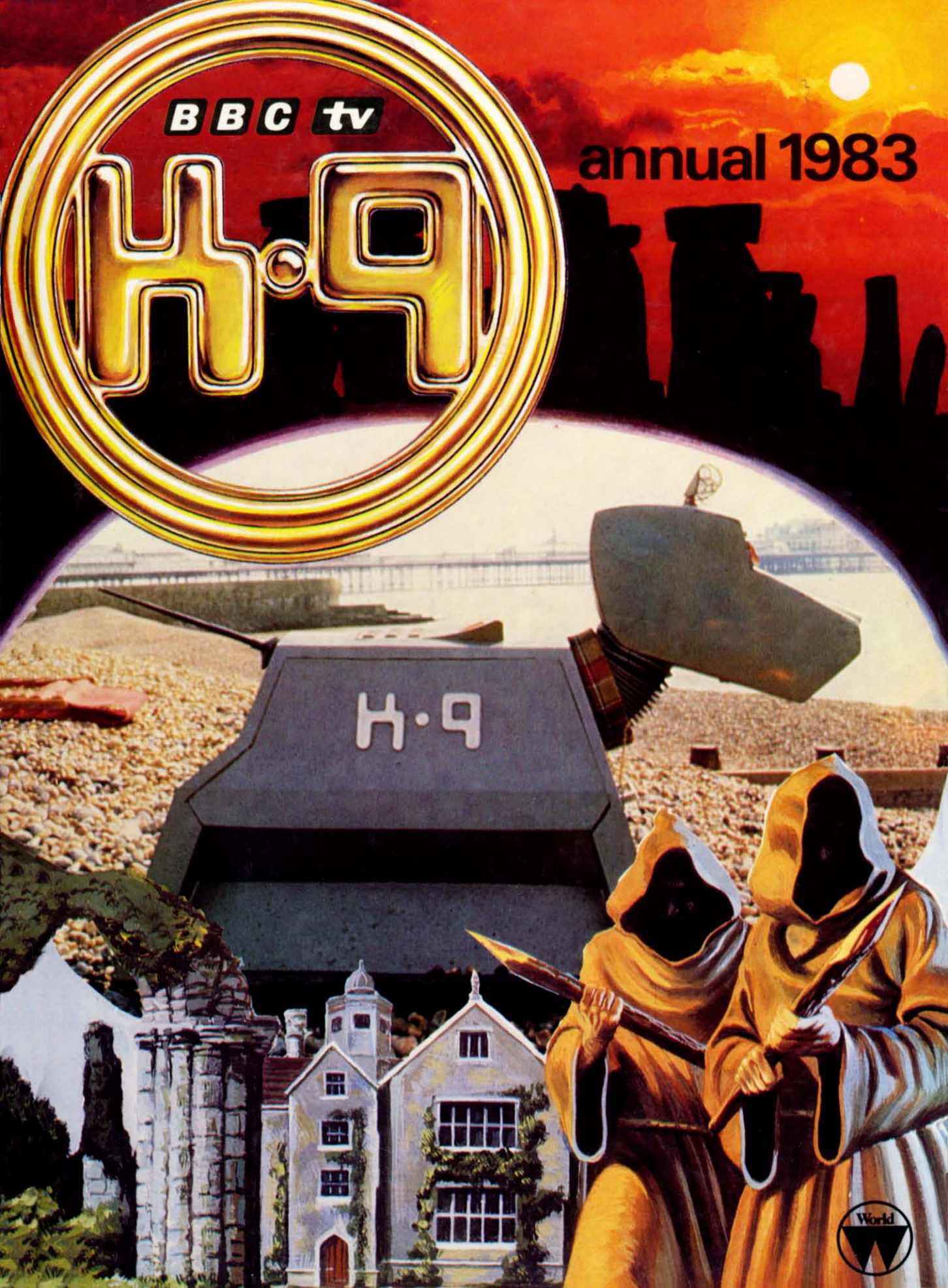
BBC tv

H·9

annual 1983



World

Copyright © MCMLXXXII by British Broadcasting Corporation.
All rights reserved throughout the world.
Published in Great Britain by World International Publishing Limited.
A Pentos Company, P. O. Box 111, Great Ducie Street, Manchester M60 3BL.
by arrangement with the British Broadcasting Corporation.
Printed in Belgium. SBN 7235 6661 5.

CONTENTS

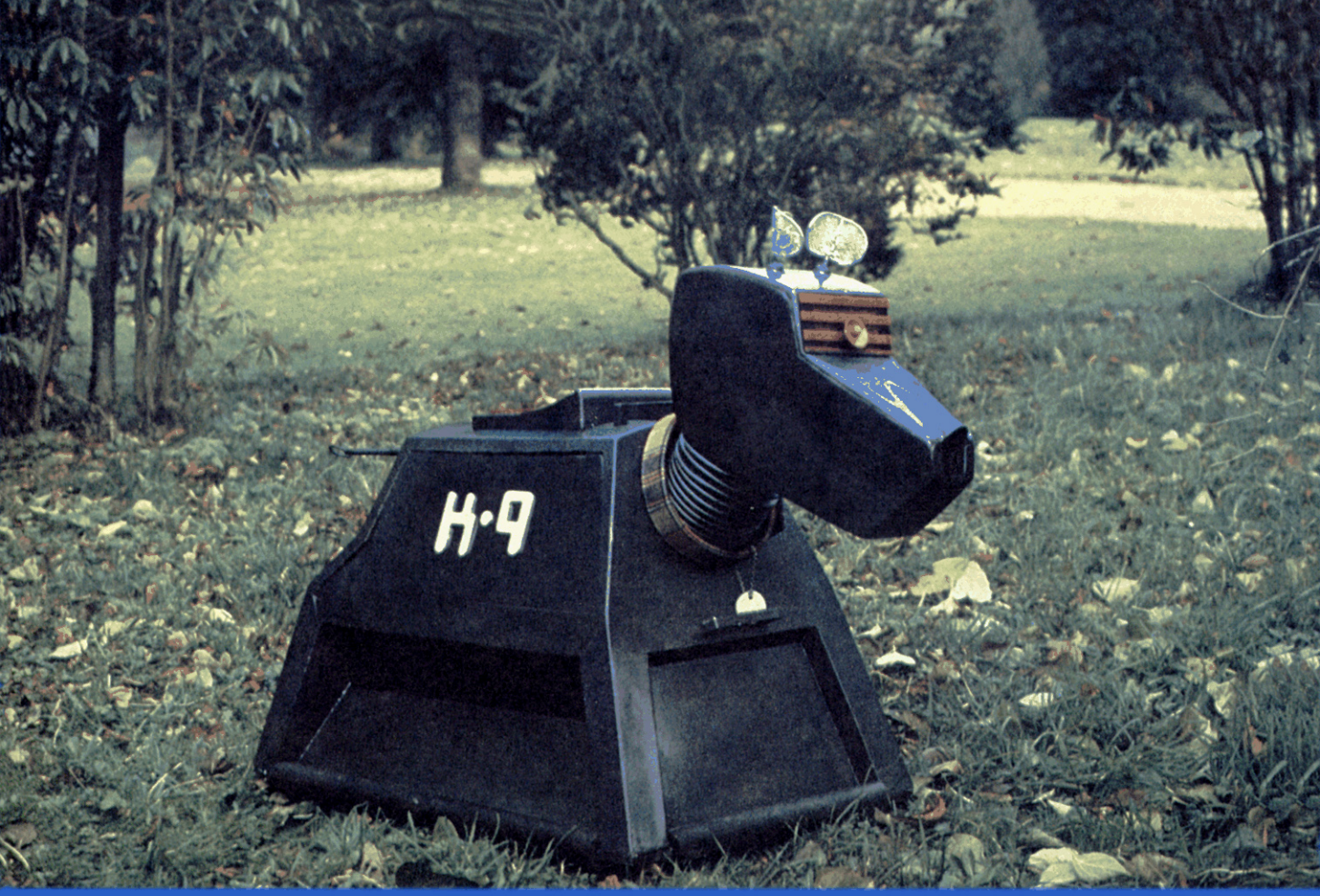
STORIES

Powerstone 7
The Shroud of Azaroth 18
Hound of Hell 26
The Monster of Loch Crag 36
Horror Hotel 48
The Curse of Kanbo-Ala 55

FEATURES

Introducing K9 4
Meet Sarah Jane Smith 6
Can You Follow Instructions? 13
The Shape of TV To Come 14
Professor Rubik's Cube 16
Talking of Technology 24
K9's Quiz 33
What is the Secret of the Standing Stones? 34
Myth or Monster? 43
UFOs – Is This the Answer? 45
Once Upon A Time, There Was A Robot 46
Ghostly Goings On 62

£2.50



INTRODUCING K9

K9 is no ordinary canine. To give him his precise due, he is a real-time data analyser robot, who just happens to be in the shape of a mechanical dog. With his original master, the Time Lord Dr Who, K9 has already seen action and adventure a-plenty, and he's analysed himself and the Doctor out of many a tricky corner.

K9's space-travelling days are behind him now, but that doesn't mean he's out of action. Quite the opposite, in fact.

K9 has been assigned to assist investigative journalist Sarah Jane Smith in the course of her dramatic exposés and startling stories, and he's already proving to be just the kind of helpmate every investigative journalist needs. He doesn't get flustered (that was never in any of his memory programmes), and he possesses all the loyalty and obedience of the more familiar four-footed friends.

As for intelligence, well, K9 would be a candidate for Mensa if they had any openings for metal members. He has an IQ of over 300, and can

analyse a problem with devastating accuracy, in less than two flicks of a dog's tail . . . so to speak.

K9 has a blaster in his snout which extends to stun any adversary, and it can even kill, if the danger is sufficiently deadly. He can move his head up and down in order to direct this blaster, which shoots off a powerful red ray.

Not to be confused with the blaster, K9 also has a probe, which extends from his head to allow him to analyse objects which would otherwise be just out of his range.

K9 has been programmed to speak his replies to questions, but for occasions when he is left alone to conduct detailed analyses, he has also been equipped with a ticker-tape facility, which discharges from his mouth.

He is fitted with tracks, to facilitate movement on rough ground, and one other feature of note is his tail, which moves up and down and from side to side. This is an indicator of K9's opinions on various matters, and it does have a certain parallel among his more ordinary cousins.

Footnote

Just to keep the record straight, the K9 who helps Sarah Jane Smith is actually Mark III of the model. Mark I was left on the planet Gallifrey, with the Doctor's assistant Leela, and Mark II was left in E-space with Romana II.

Sarah Jane first met the Doctor when she visited a Research Establishment where there had been a number of mysterious disappearances. She posed as her aunt to gain admittance, and found that the mystery was also being investigated by the Doctor, who was at that time working with UNIT.

Sarah Jane stowed away in the Tardis, and that was the beginning of her association with the Doctor, which was to take her on many fantastic journeys through time and space. Sarah Jane stood beside the Doctor as he faced the Sontaran Linx, the Daleks, the Cybermen and the Ice Warriors, and she remained with him when he changed from his third to his fourth incarnation.

Their association came to a rather sudden end when the Doctor was summoned to Gallifrey by his fellow Time Lords, and he decided that he could not risk Sarah Jane's safety on this dangerous mission. Sarah Jane found herself back on earth, and her life became more normal, for a while.

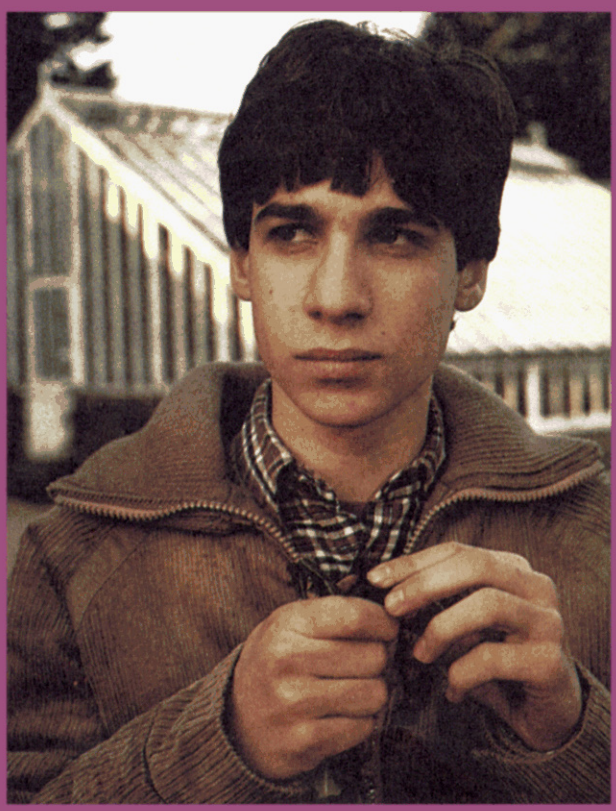
Now though, with her nephew Brendan, Sarah Jane is facing danger once more, as her investigative talents lead her into ever more puzzling – and more dangerous – mysteries.

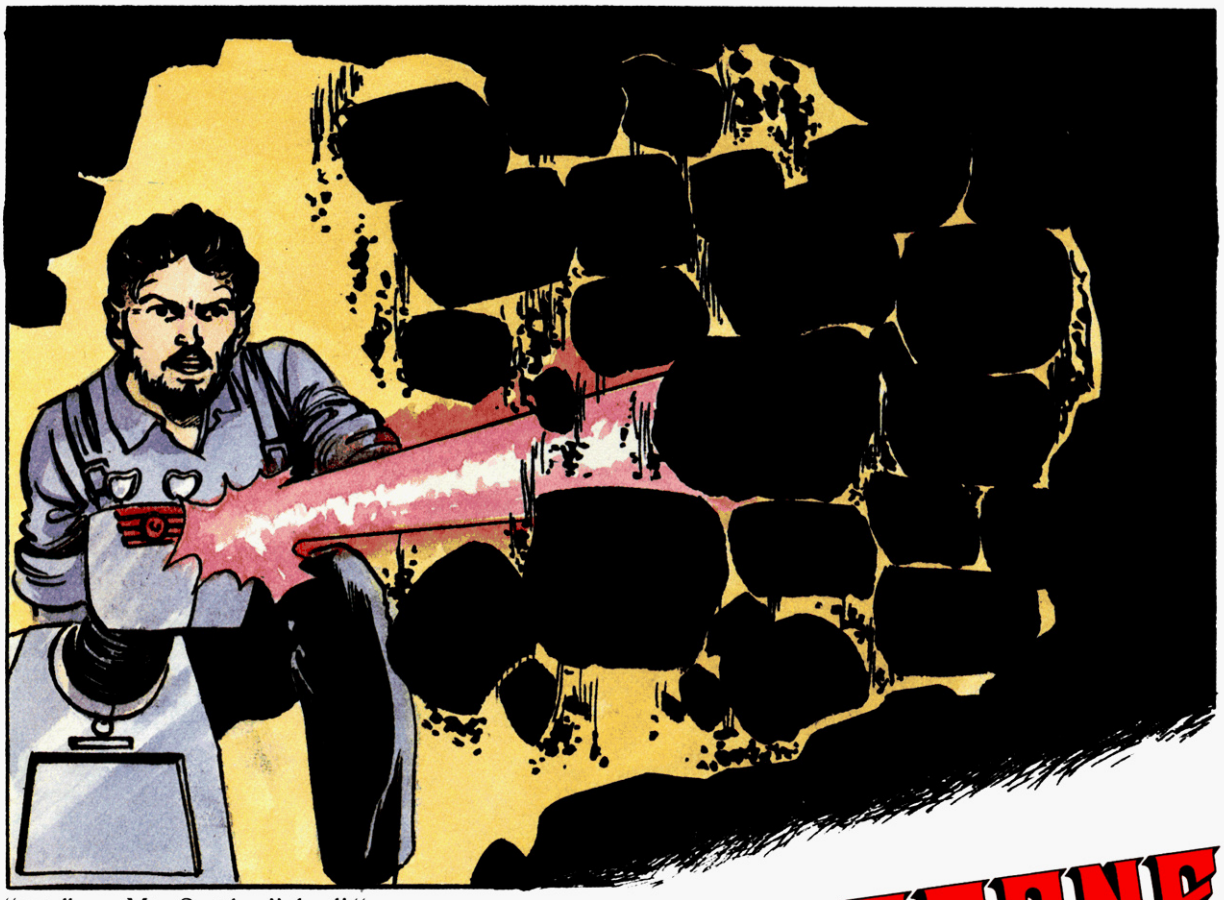
Sarah Jane Smith never ceases to bless the day when she opened that wooden box, and found that the Doctor had thoughtfully sent her the best present she could ever have. He may look rather odd, and he may be a bit of a know-it-all, but you couldn't have a better canine than K9!

meet Sarah Jane Smith

Sarah Jane Smith is a freelance journalist by profession, and fiercely independent by nature.

Orphaned as a child, she was brought up by her aunt, the distinguished scientist Miss Lavinia Smith, and since her aunt was always busy, and Sarah Jane spent a lot of her time amusing herself, the child grew up to be the kind of young woman who can look after herself very well, thank you, and doesn't need any help from anybody... with the exception of K9.





POWERSTONE

"Tell me, Miss Smith – " *thud!* " – what started your – " *thud! bang!* " – journalistic interest in – " *bang! thud! thud!* " – witchcraft and the supernatural?"

Sarah Jane waited a few seconds for the noises that had punctuated Toby Gough's question to abate. When they did she quickly ran through her answer in her mind before answering. It was satisfactory. "Well, I think," she began, "that I was really – " *crash!* Sarah Jane broke off and sighed impatiently at the further interruption. This was ridiculous! "I'm sorry, Toby," she said. "I suppose I should have realised that this would be a bad day for you to interview me. Perhaps you'd better come back another day."

Toby Gough nodded. "Alright with me, Miss Smith," he said, packing away his tape recorder. "But it'll have to be before the end of the week, otherwise we won't be in time for next week's deadline."

"Make it Friday, then," said Sarah Jane, smiling. She had to admit that she was rather looking forward to seeing herself in the 'Interesting Neighbours' column of the local weekly paper. She had become quite a celebrity since moving down to Moreton Harwood!

"What's going on, anyway?" asked Toby Gough.

"All the noise, you mean?" said Sarah Jane. "Oh, my Aunt decided that she wanted more storage space in the basement so my Aunt's ward is knocking out a couple of walls. I must admit he's doing quite a good job." Sarah Jane smiled. "If a bit noisily. Come on, I'll see you to the door."

Sarah Jane rose from her chair. Toby Gough packed away the last of his things and followed. The thudding, banging and crashing recommenced from somewhere downstairs.

"A bit to your left, K9," said Brendan. "That's it. Fire!"

K9 fired as requested. The laser beam that shot from his snout started to cut away at a chunk of mortar between two bricks. The mortar soon dissolved. Brendan and K9 moved back as the bricks, freed of their bonding, fell from the wall with a crash. A billowing cloud of dust obscured the work area.

"Perfect!" declared Brendan. "Good job, K9!"

"Affirmative, Master Brendan," said K9, "shall I continue?"

"Not yet, K9," said Brendan, moving to the spot from where the bricks had fallen. "I want to check how far back these bricks go."

"I will scan," said K9. "Density indicates..."

"No, K9," interrupted Brendan. "Sarah and Aunt Lavinia will mur-

der me if they find out I made you do *all* the work!" Brendan started to probe into the recently created hole. "It won't take me long."

The space left by the missing bricks was at approximately head height, and Brendan was surprised to find that his hand vanished into it, surprised because he had expected to feel more bricks. Instead, the hole seemed to stretch back and open out. It was very dark inside. Puzzled, Brendan bent down and picked up a torch. Flicking on the light, he stuck the torch into the hole. He pulled it out again a second later, his hand shaking, his face an ashen mask.

"Sarah," he croaked, and then it turned into a terrified scream of horror, "Sarah Jane!"

Sarah Jane was just saying goodbye to Toby Gough when Brendan's scream echoed out of the basement. She spun around, the cold hand of fear on her heart. Brendan sounded like he had had an accident!

Sarah Jane ran to the stairway that led down to the basement. "Come on, Toby!" she yelled.

Brendan sat on the floor amidst a pile of bricks and powdered mortar. K9 was nearby, his probe pointing up towards the hole. Sarah Jane ran to both of them. "What is it?" she demanded. "What happened?"

"The hole," said Brendan, weakly, "look in the hole!"

The shock that he had had a few moments before was still evident in Brendan's voice, and Sarah Jane hesitated before she did as he asked. Then she picked up Brendan's discarded torch and peered in. She had to stop herself from jumping back in horror as Brendan had done

Beyond the wall was a cave about the size of a small cupboard. Rocks and bits of moss lay scattered about it. Here and there, droplets of water fell from overhangs and splattered on the cave's rocky floor. There was a dank and musty smell. The thing that had made Sarah Jane and Brendan jump was lying in the middle of the cave, half-obscured by what looked like the remains of an old rock-fall. It was a body!

Intrigued by Sarah Jane's reaction, Toby Gough moved over to the hole. He too gasped in shock. "Will you look at that!" he said. Not taking his eyes off the body, he started to pull a camera from his satchel.

Sarah Jane played the torch beam over the body. It was old, very old, and all that remained was a skeleton and the rotted pieces of a rough, simple robe. The hollow eyes of the skull stared out from beneath a tatty hood, and the arm of the skeleton seemed to be stretching out ahead towards whatever the eyes had once stared at. Boney fingers had gouged themselves into the soil between the rocks. "The cave roof must have fallen in on him," said Sarah Jane, "he must have been trying to pull himself free when he died."

Suddenly, the cave was filled with a brilliant light. Sarah Jane turned. Toby Gough was taking picture after picture of the cave and the body, the flash on his camera exploding into light every few seconds.

"Mr. Gough!" objected Sarah Jane. "I didn't give my permission for those pictures!"

"Can't miss an opportunity like this, Miss Smith," said Gough. "This thing will make the front page!"

Sarah Jane grabbed Gough's camera. "No more pictures. Not yet. We don't know a thing about this body; who it is, where it came

from, how old it is, anything! Until we do, I don't want any unnecessary publicity! Do you understand me?"

Gough shrugged and apologised. "Alright, Miss Smith," he said. "I won't put anything in my paper until we know what's going on. Can I have my camera back?"

Sarah Jane hesitated, then smiled. She knew that she would probably have done the same thing in Toby Gough's place, and that she *had* done many times in the past. After all, that was what being an investigative reporter was all about! She handed the camera back to Gough.

"Now," she said, "I suppose we'd better let the police know about the body. Come on." Sarah Jane began to make her way out of the basement.

As the others warily followed, casting frequent glances back towards the unseeing eyes of the skeleton, one thought stuck in Sarah Jane's mind: just *how* had an apparently centuries-old body got where it was? What had *happened* all those years ago?

"No publicity!" bawled Sarah Jane, angrily, the next morning, "Gough agreed!" She threw that morning's copy of *The Standard* down on the coffee table and fumed. The paper's headline read: 'MYSTERY SKELETON DISCOVERED!', and next to it was a large photograph of the previous day's discovery.

"Freedom of the press, my dear," said Aunt Lavinia, matter-of-factly.

"I'll give him freedom of the press!" shouted Sarah Jane. "Just wait till I get my hands on him! When I do, I'll – "

Sarah Jane was interrupted by the telephone starting to ring. Aunt Lavinia got up and walked over to it, picking up the receiver. "Seven-seven-eight," she said.

"This is what I didn't want," Sarah Jane whispered to Brendan, "now that one paper's got it, every national in the country will want further 'exclusives'!" She turned to Aunt Lavinia. "Whichever paper it is, tell them no!"

Aunt Lavinia put down the phone. "It isn't a reporter, dear," she said, "it's a Professor Clay of the museum's history department. He wants to speak with you."

Sarah Jane put down her coffee and went to the phone. Aunt Lavinia handed over the receiver. "Professor Clay?" said Sarah Jane. "What can I do for you?"

"Miss Smith," said Clay, "I must see you about the article in this morning's *Standard*. Could you possibly come around to the museum? This evening, perhaps?"

"Well, I don't know," said Sarah Jane, "is it important?"

"Yes, Miss Smith," replied Clay,

gravely, "I would even go so far as to say it was a matter of life and death."

Sarah Jane paused. What could he mean? She knew that there was only one way to find out. "Very well, Professor Clay," she said, "I'll be around this evening."

Professor Clay uttered a brief thank you and goodbye, and then there was a click and a buzz on the line.

The road to the local museum twisted and turned through country hills and dales, and, with the added problems of a heavy rain that had started when darkness fell, Sarah Jane was having difficulty keeping to the correct route.

"Turn right at next junction, Mistress," said K9, scanning the map laid out on the dashboard.

"Thanks, K9," said Sarah Jane, "why do these places always have to be out in the middle of nowhere!" She peered out through the rain-battered windscreen. There was a sign-posted junction a little way ahead. "Here?"

"Affirmative," confirmed K9.

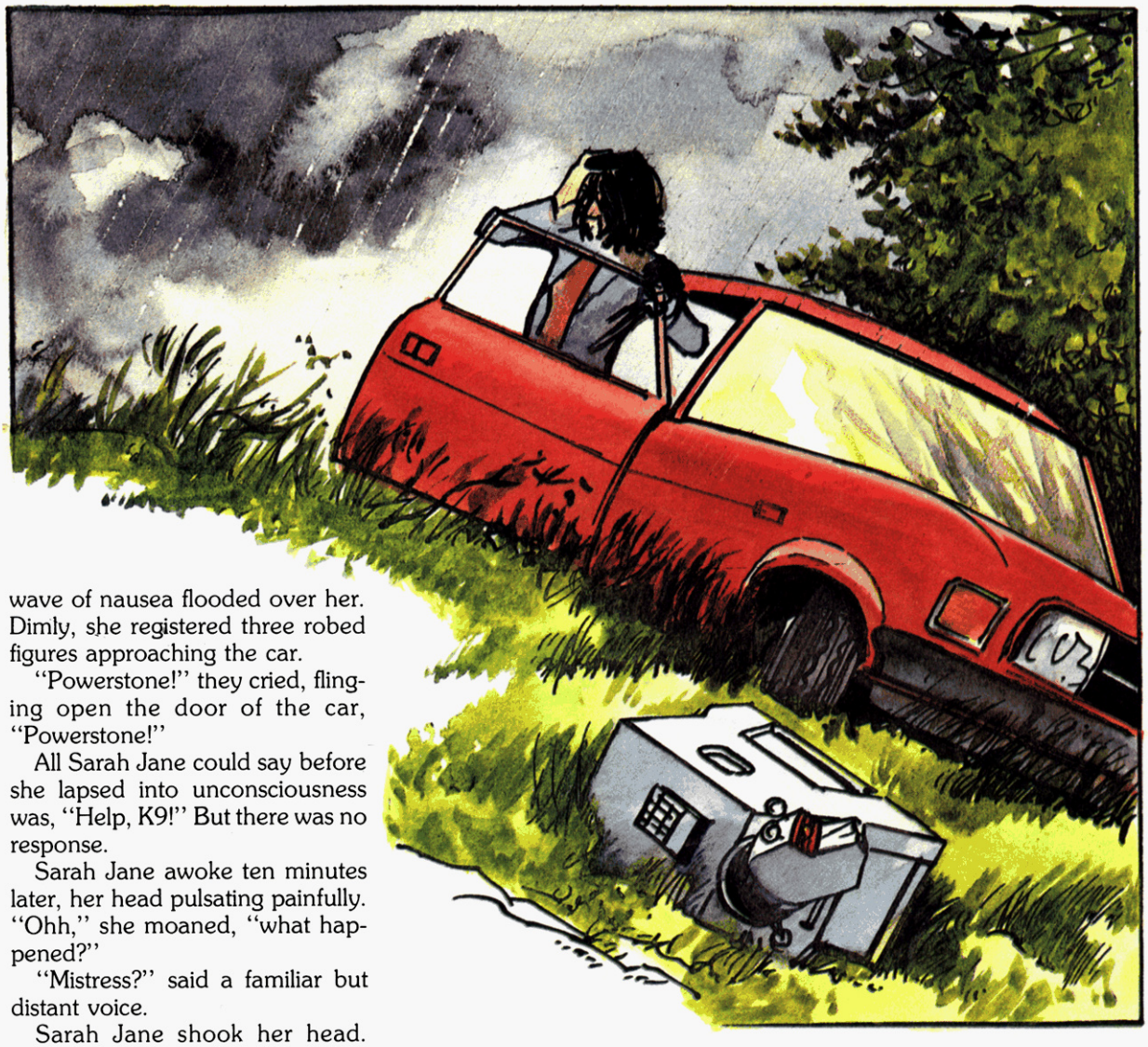
Sarah Jane turned the car around the corner. A straight road stretched out ahead. Glad to be finally off the winding country lanes and onto a proper route, Sarah Jane accelerated. "We should be there in no time now," she said.

"Obstruction ahead, Mistress!" barked K9.

Startled by the sudden and unexpected declaration, Sarah Jane stared out through the windscreen. Three robed figures stood directly in the car's path! But the road had been clear a second ago! They must have leapt out of the bushes!

Sarah Jane slammed her foot on the brake pedal. It was too late! She wasn't going to stop in time! In a last, desperate attempt to avoid a collision, Sarah Jane spun the steering wheel to the left. The car shot off the road and ploughed straight into a ditch!

Sarah Jane felt her head crash into the dashboard, and a thick



wave of nausea flooded over her. Dimly, she registered three robed figures approaching the car.

"Powerstone!" they cried, flinging open the door of the car, "Powerstone!"

All Sarah Jane could say before she lapsed into unconsciousness was, "Help, K9!" But there was no response.

Sarah Jane awoke ten minutes later, her head pulsating painfully. "Ohh," she moaned, "what happened?"

"Mistress?" said a familiar but distant voice.

Sarah Jane shook her head. "K9?" She turned to where her computerised companion should have been sitting, but the passenger seat was empty. Rain blew in through the open passenger door. Sarah Jane stepped out of her side of the car. "K9?" she repeated.

K9 lay on the ground nearby, his squat, metallic body tipped onto its side. Sarah Jane went over to him and lifted him back to his proper position. "You must have been thrown clear when we crashed," she said. "Are you alright?"

"I am undamaged, Mistress," said K9. "The accident was not severe."

Sarah Jane remembered the three robed figures. "I don't think it *was* an accident, K9," she said. "I think we were deliberately ambushed! The question is, why?"

"Unknown, Mistress," said K9. "Suggest we continue journey. Professor Clay may be able to offer further information."

Sarah Jane nodded. "I think you may be right. I've got a feeling that this ambush has something to do with the body we found." Sarah Jane turned back to look at her car. The front wheels had buried themselves up to the chassis in mud. "But we're not going to be continuing our journey in my car, I'm afraid. I'll have to call the garage."

"Public telephone booth located approximately three hundred and fifty yards to our rear, Mistress," K9 pointed out.

Sarah Jane looked back the way they had come. "Right," she said, "we'd better start walking."

Just after she called the garage, Sarah Jane put in a call to Professor Clay, explaining why she couldn't make the meeting. Clay asked where she was and told her to stay there, and half an hour later his car appeared from a side road.

Sarah Jane and K9 took the passenger seats. While he started to explain why he had wanted to see Sarah Jane, Professor Clay steered his car back onto the road for Moreton Harwood.

"So, you see," he said, after he had gone through the basics, "the body you discovered was that of a member of a fourteenth century coven which used to gather in the caves below Moreton Harwood. It's really not surprising that you came across him, the cave system is quite large. Many houses in the area are built over old passageways and tunnels. A cave-in probably just opened one up so that it

ran parallel with your basement wall."

"Do you think there are more bodies down there?" asked Sarah Jane.

"Oh, undoubtedly," said Professor Clay. "It's a historical fact that when most of the cave system collapsed there was a meeting of the coven in progress. I very much doubt that many of them got out alive."

"But those that did carried the coven on, you say?"

Professor Clay nodded. "Though inactively. It's a ruling of this particular coven that no meetings can be held without the *powerstone*, the thing that's supposed to concentrate the dark forces that they worship. And that *powerstone* was lost during the collapse of the system."

"So you think that that was what they were after?" asked Sarah Jane. "The people on the road, I mean?"

"Yes," said Professor Clay. "Even though the odds on that particular body being in possession of the *powerstone* are probably twenty to one, the descendents of the original coven members would still clutch at straws to find it. They have been deprived of it for over four hundred years, after all!"

"Well, they're out of luck this time," said Sarah Jane. "The police removed the skeleton this afternoon. There was nothing on it." Sarah Jane stared out of the windscreen. The manor house drive was approaching on the left. "Next one," she said. "In here, that's it."

Professor Clay guided his car into the small tree-lined drive and up to the manor house. Parking in front of the main porch, he killed the engine. Sarah Jane got out and lifted K9 after her. "Caution, Mistress," he said.

Sarah Jane wondered what K9 meant, and then she realised. The manor house was dark. There wasn't a light in any window.

"That's odd," she said. "Brendan and Aunt Lavinia should be in." As she spoke, Sarah Jane was aware of how loud her voice sounded in the still night air. She turned to Professor Clay, a feeling of foreboding creeping up on her. "You don't think – ?"

Professor Clay nodded. "The coven. I half expected this. I did say they would clutch at straws to get hold of the *powerstone*. They're probably searching your basement right now!"

Thoughts of Brendan and Aunt Lavinia shot through Sarah Jane's mind. If the coven had harmed them! "K9!" Sarah Jane said, "your laser!" Slowly, she started to move towards the front door.

Professor Clay called out from behind her. "Don't worry," he said. "The matter is in hand."

Sarah Jane turned, wondering what Professor Clay meant.

"I took the precaution of calling the police after you told me of your road accident," he continued. "They came straight here."

The door of the manor house opened. Sarah Jane spun back to face it. A squad of policemen poured out, each one holding a struggling, robed figure in his arms. Brendan and Aunt Lavinia appeared behind them. "Sarah," said Brendan, moving over to the lead prisoner, "I think you know this one." With a flourish, Brendan pulled back the figure's hood. Toby Gough snarled at him. "Now you know why he printed the story," Brendan declared, "he wanted to let all his fellow coven members know of the discovery!"

Sarah Jane walked over to the captive Toby Gough. "Well, Mr. Gough," she said, smiling, "this makes a change. Tomorrow, you won't be *making* the news. Tomorrow, you'll *be* the news!"

Can you follow instructions?

Well, can you? Take a pencil and a large, clean sheet of paper, sit at a desk or table and see how good you are at following instructions. Then try out the test on a friend.

1. Read everything before you do anything.
2. Put your name in the upper right-hand corner of the page.
3. Circle your name.
4. Draw five one-inch squares in the upper left-hand corner of the paper.
5. Put an X in each of the squares.
6. Draw a circle around each X.
7. Write the square root of nine next to the last square.
8. Multiply the number of squares by the answer to question 7 and write the answer under the second square.
9. Draw an X in the lower left-hand corner of the paper.
10. Draw a triangle around the X you just drew.
11. Multiply 70 × 30 and write the answer in the middle of the sheet of paper.
12. Draw a circle around the answer to question 11.
13. When you reach this point, shout, "I've finished the test!"
14. If you think you have followed all the instructions carefully shout, "I have followed all the instructions carefully!"
15. Count out the numbers from one to ten in your normal speaking voice.
16. Punch three small holes in the bottom right-hand corner of your paper. Use a pencil to punch the holes.
17. When you get this far shout, "I'm really good at following instructions!"
18. Now that you've finished reading carefully, obey instructions 1 and 2 only.

Well, how did you fare? Did you follow instructions carefully?

THE SHAPE OF TV TO COME

Within the next few years the way that we view and use television will change drastically. We will have far greater choice in what we view—and when we view it—and there will be a whole new range of programmes and services from which to choose. The changes will be thanks to two important technological developments—direct broadcast satellites and cable-casting.

The direct broadcast satellite television service will mean that television programmes will be beamed into our homes from space.

Providing that you pay to have special adaptations made to your TV set, you will be able to choose from a number of channels all relayed by satellite. To ensure good reception, dish shaped receivers will be fixed to house roofs, and the three-feet-wide receivers should be able to pick up signals from as many as fifty stations —quite an improvement on BBC1, BBC2 and ITV.

But the more stations you choose to have access to, the more you'll have to pay for the privilege. Special scrambling devices will mean that channels you don't pay for won't be available on your set.

But the cost is not expected to be exhorbitant. A five-channel system will cost some £50 million a year to run, and that would mean an increase in the licence fee of about £5 at current rates. One system of payment might be by subscription, with viewers paying a special levy to receive satellite programmes.

So will satellite TV mean the end of BBC and ITV? No, they will continue, and will share the satellites, probably leasing time on them from the British aerospace industry.

The present-day high mast ground transmitters will probably remain, too, at least for the forseeable future, as their average life is some thirty years as opposed to the satellite's five.

Cable-casting is already big news —and big business—in America.

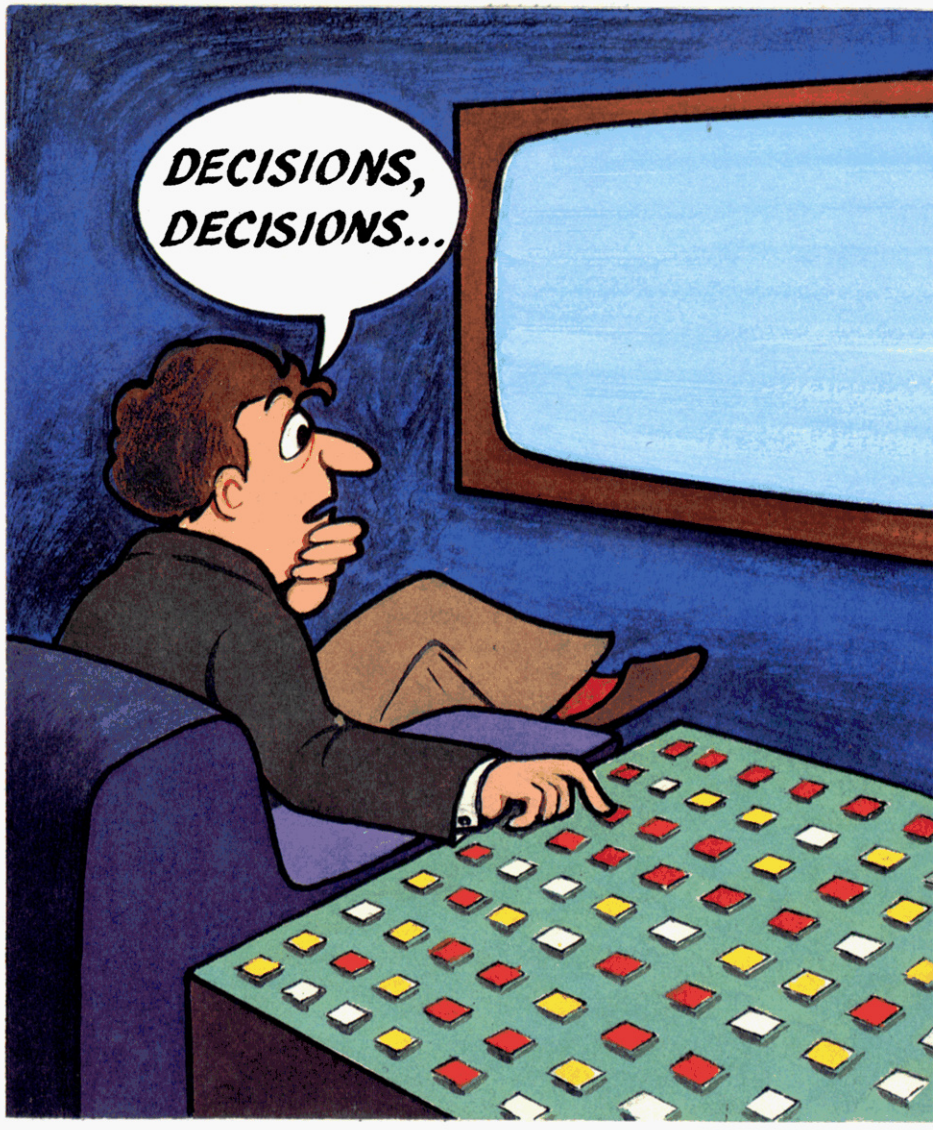
The key to cable television is the development of wideband fibre-optic cable—tiny strands of optically pure glass through which information can be passed in the form of laser light. **Each** of these cables can carry up to a million million cycles of information per second (1 Ghz), and that is sufficient for something like eighty full-colour television channels. So compact are the fibre-optic cables that could run to every home that each set could receive a staggering 1,000 channels.

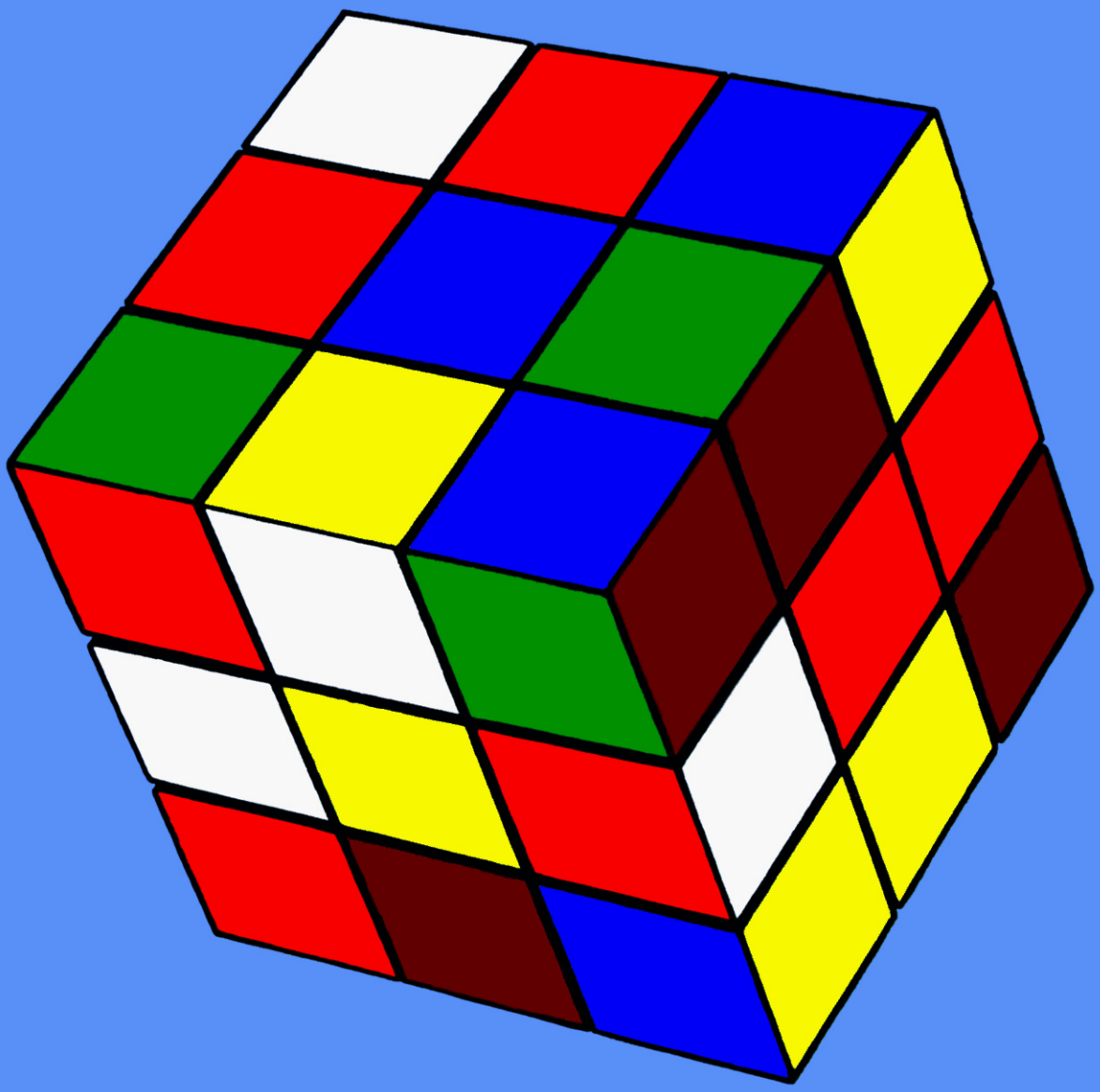
TV channels will probably specialise much more in the future. Some may concentrate on showing full-length feature films, others will specialise in minority-interest programmes, while others will be 24-hour news stations. In Britain, the Open University may use one of the channels, while another might transmit live from Parliament.

And multi-channel cable systems won't only be used by TV; business and industry will find it invaluable for transmitting messages and information quickly and efficiently both within countries and throughout the world.

Thus **broad**casting—transmitting to millions worldwide—will increase, but so will **narrow**casting—sending messages to very small audiences. It is this last use which will really benefit commerce—for example, employees will be able to receive messages from the chairman, work rota information etc, on their own TV sets at home. And some of these restricted user channels will provide a keyboard along with the set so that employees can also send as well as receive messages, making their TV a two-way communication centre. It may even be possible to shop via the television set, ordering goods from home and paying back by keying-in credit card numbers into the system.

By the 1990s that three-channel television set sitting in a corner of most homes will be a thing of the past...





Professor Rubik's Cube

When Professor Ernö Rubik of Budapest was teaching his students the principles of geometrical sculpture he found that they had great difficulty in grasping the idea of three-dimensional design images. So the professor devised a simple teaching aid, made from scraps of wood and coloured tape, to help them.

Professor Rubik couldn't possibly have imagined that soon his simple teaching aid would be on sale all over the world, driving millions of people slowly mad...

I'll explain. The Rubik Cube, as the device became known, fascinated the professor's students, and everyone else who saw it. Such was the demand for the coloured cube that it was patented, manufactured and put on the market. In Hungary almost half a million Cubes were sold in two years (that's one for about every twentieth person in the whole population) and soon the Cube was being puzzled over in almost every corner of the world, with sales in early 1981 topping seven million and rising.

But what **is** the Rubik Cube? The multi-coloured object is deceptively simple. Attractive to look at and pleasant to hold, it is made up of twenty-seven Oxo-cube-size cubes, arranged in three layers of nine to form a 2¼" block. Each side of the Cube shows matching coloured faces... at least the colours match when you first buy one.

The idea is that you unpack the Cube, mix up the coloured cubes by means of a hidden mechanical system that enable each face of the cube to revolve horizontally and vertically, then manipulate the Cube so that each face of the cube is a solid colour again.

Soccer stars Emlyn Hughes and Andy Gray seem to be having trouble...

That solution to the puzzle sounds simple, doesn't it? But ask someone who's tried it, or better still try yourself, and you'll soon find that it is anything but simple. There are a mind-boggling **43,252,003,274,489,856,000** possible colour combinations—and just **one** correct one.

It has been estimated that a computer operating at one change of pattern per micro-second would take about 3,000 million years just to count the pattern changes!

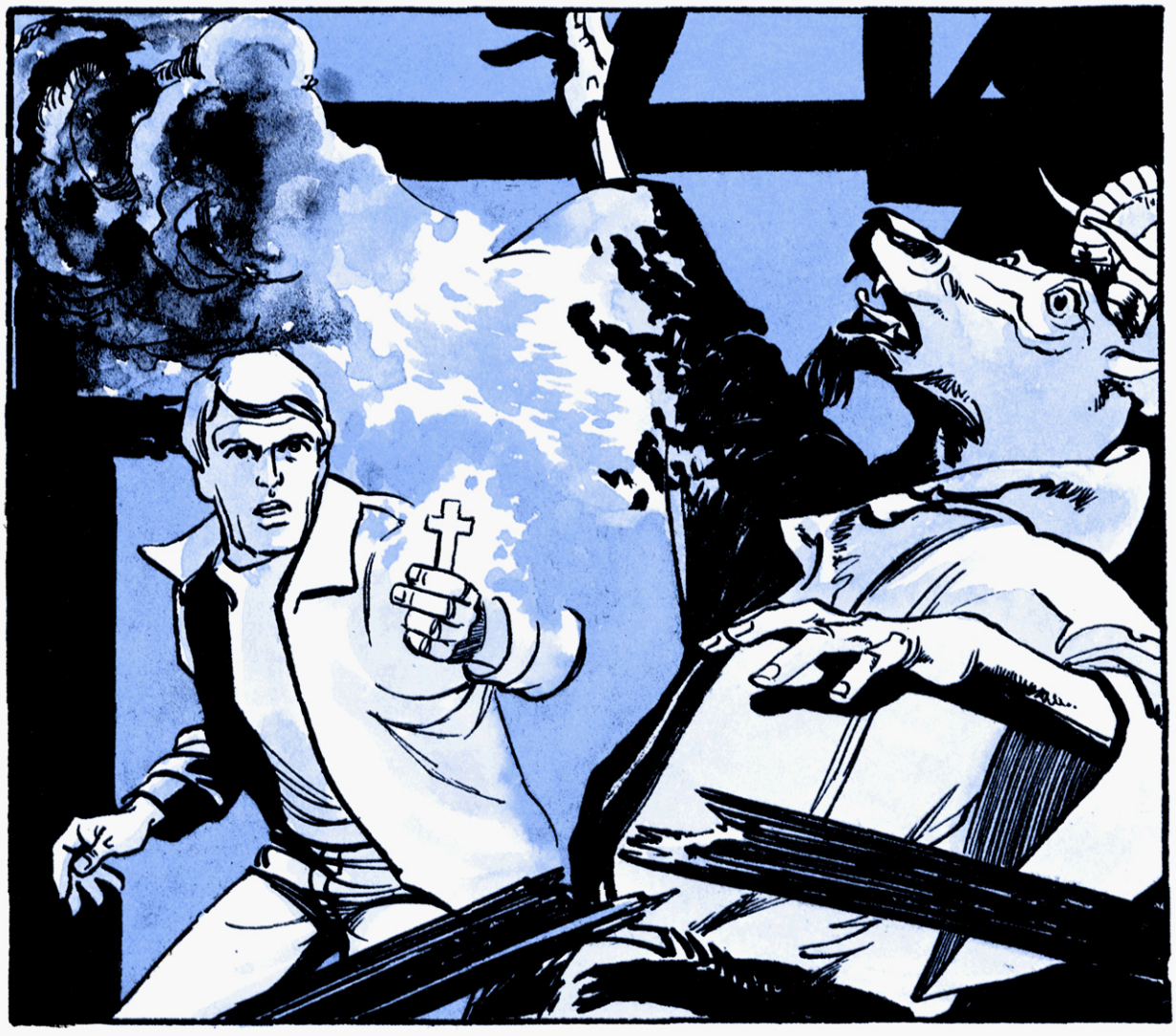
Yet the puzzle **can** be solved, and children find it easier than adults. In fact adults lag behind in this test of mental gymnastics—top standard for them is three minutes to solve the puzzle; for children it's one minute.

The world record at the time of writing is held by Nottingham 'A' level student Nicholas Hammond, who unscrambled the Cube in just 37 seconds—and if you've tried the puzzle you'll know how incredible that is.

Very few people have been able to work out how the Cube is put together, and it has been described as a brilliantly simple masterpiece of three-dimensional design. Made in Hungary, they are sold all over the world with their secret locked safely inside.

Why not try the mindbending Rubik Cube? If you get it wrong the first time, remember that there are only another 43,252,003,274,489,855,999 possible colour combinations...

...but it's child's play for schoolboy David Millburn, who cracked the Cube in 54 seconds.



THE SHROUD OF AZAROTH

Flames consuming his arm, the screaming figure of the demon Azaroth raced along the balcony in a desperate dash for freedom. From behind, Luke Dyson, clutching his injured shoulder with one hand and brandishing a crucifix with the other, called out his name. Azaroth spun to face him and howled like a trapped animal. Dyson smiled and thrust the crucifix into Azaroth's goat-like face. With a defiant glare, Azaroth leapt from the balcony, and with a final scream plummeted towards the floor far below!

"Cut!" yelled George Spielberg. "Print it!"

A loud cheer went around the room. On the balcony, the actor playing Luke Dyson dropped his crucifix and mopped his brow. The demon Azaroth picked himself up from the pile of cushions on which he had landed and waited patiently while a technician sprayed his burning arm with a fire extinguisher.

"OK, folks," continued Spielberg, "that's it for the day. Kill the lights." He turned to face a young woman by his side.

"Well, Sarah," he said, "did you enjoy your look into how a film is made?"

Sarah Jane smiled. "Very much, George. Thanks for letting me come and watch."

"You're welcome," Spielberg said. "What about your friend?" he added, looking down at K9.

"My data banks have accumulated much information relevant to the field of cinematic production," said K9. "Thank you."

Spielberg sighed wistfully. "Ah, K9. I wish I could use you in one of my films. You'd be a box office sensation.".

Sarah Jane giggled. "I can't quite see K9 playing the romantic lead in something like *Gone With The Wind*, can you?"

"Perhaps not, but..." Spielberg

began, but never finished. The conversation was broken by a sound from the balcony. Sarah Jane and Spielberg looked up. A figure was stumbling towards the safety rail at its edge. "Look out!" cried Spielberg. "You'll fall!"

Fleetingly, Sarah Jane had the thought that the figure might have been one of the unit's stuntmen practising for the next day, but when she heard the crack of splintering wood from the railing she knew she was wrong. As she watched in horror, the railing parted and the figure came hurtling over the edge, and this time there were no cushions to break the fall! The figure hit the floor with a sickening thud. "No!" yelled Spielberg. "Not again!"

Sarah Jane and Spielberg ran over to the still body, closely followed by K9 and the remaining members of the film crew. Sarah Jane turned the body over. It was one of the lighting technicians. A trickle of blood ran from his mouth. "How bad is it?" Spielberg asked, his voice unsteady.

"K9?" said Sarah Jane.

K9 extended his probe. "Injuries sustained as a result of fall are minimal, Mistress," he diagnosed. "However, human has entered shock. Immediate hospitalisation necessary for continuation of physiological functions."

Sarah Jane stood up. "Someone get an ambulance. Quickly!"

George Spielberg stepped back from the injured man, burying his head in his hands. Sarah Jane went to him. "George," she said, gently, "what did you mean before, when you yelled 'not again'?"

Spielberg put down his hands and looked at her. "This house is cursed," he said, more than a hint of fear in his voice, "cursed by the shroud of Azaroth!"

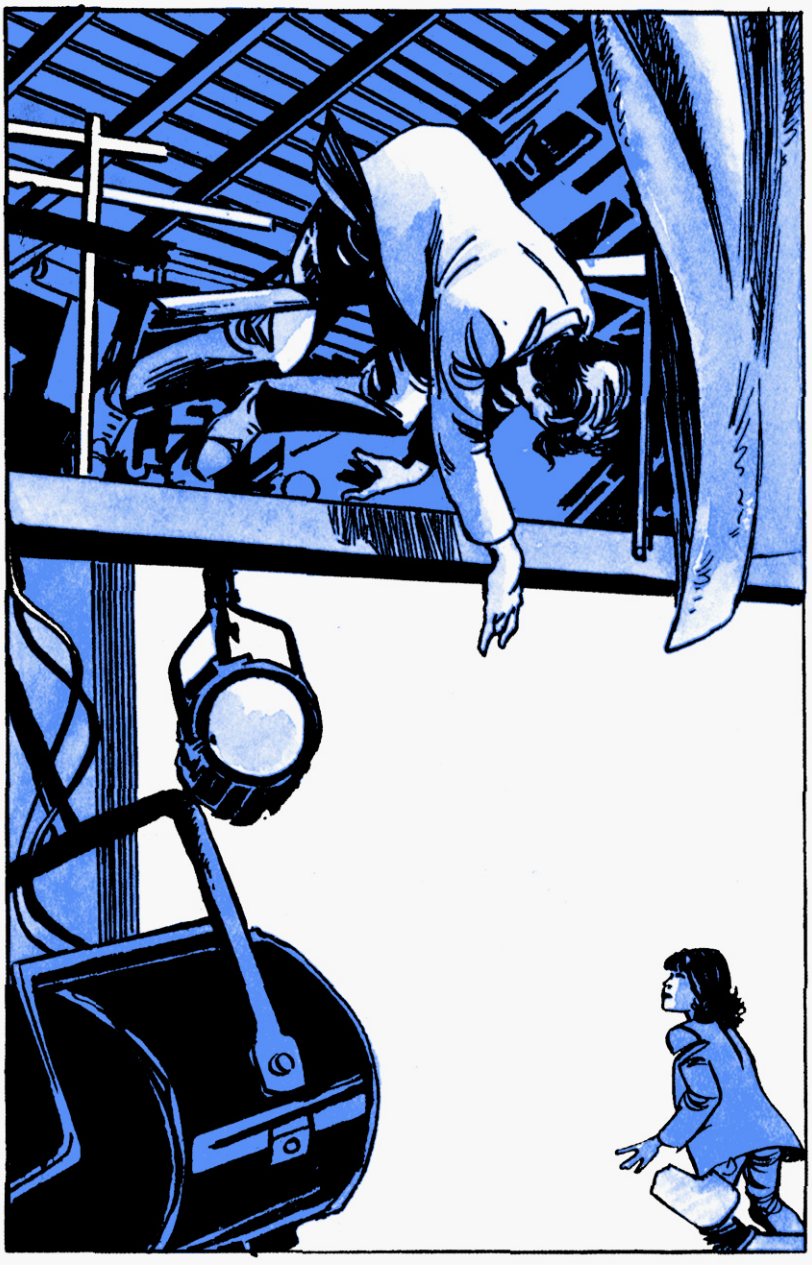
Sarah Jane took Spielberg by the arm and led him into a side room, a study, away from other ears. Once he had settled down, he began to tell her about the other 'accidents', and everything that had happened since they had arrived on location. Sarah Jane listened with mounting disbelief.

"So you see," he said, "this film is based on fact. The Azaroth cult actually existed, here, in this house, up until twenty years ago. It only broke up when the last of the De'Ath family, the leaders of the coven, was killed in a car accident. It was said then that the house was cursed by the arch-demon Azaroth, that anyone who entered the house would die! Of course, when I decided to use the house for added authenticity in the film, I took no notice." Spielberg took a deep breath. "Now I'm not so sure. One man has been killed, Sarah. *Killed!*"

"George," said Sarah Jane, picking her words carefully, "by the sound of things all these accidents are more than just coincidence. Curse or otherwise, something is going on. If you don't mind, K9 and I would like to stay around and get to the bottom of it."

Spielberg sighed in relief. "I was hoping you'd say that. I'll get my secretary to fix you up with a room."

Spielberg said goodnight soon afterwards, and Sarah Jane was escorted up to her room by Jill Grant, the production secretary, a pleasant girl in her early twenties.



Going up the stairs, Sarah Jane could easily understand how rumours of a curse got started in the house; its gothic design captured the mood of something unholy. But she soon forgot about that. The day on the set had been hectic, and she was asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow.

"Mistress. Wake up, Mistress," said K9. "Intruder in immediate vicinity."

Sarah Jane awoke immediately. "What is it, K9?"

"The door, Mistress," said K9, and moved over to it, his laser barrel ready to fire. "Caution is advised."

Sarah Jane got out of bed and quickly dressed. The handle on the door was rattling and turning. Someone was trying to get in! "Who is it?" Sarah Jane challenged.

Suddenly, the handle stopped moving. Sarah Jane heard the sound of running footsteps retreating down the hall. Without hesitation she flung open the door. "Come on, K9," she said. "Let's find out who our mysterious visitor was!"

The house was silent and dark, and Sarah Jane and K9 moved quietly along the corridor and out onto the balcony. There was no sign of life anywhere. Deliberately, Sarah Jane left off the lights. "Anything on infra-red, K9?" she whispered.

K9 stopped and scanned the surrounding area. Suddenly, he barked a warning: "Behind you, Mistress!"

Sarah Jane spun, her heart pounding with shock. A grey figure came hurtling out of the shadows towards her. "K9!" Sarah Jane

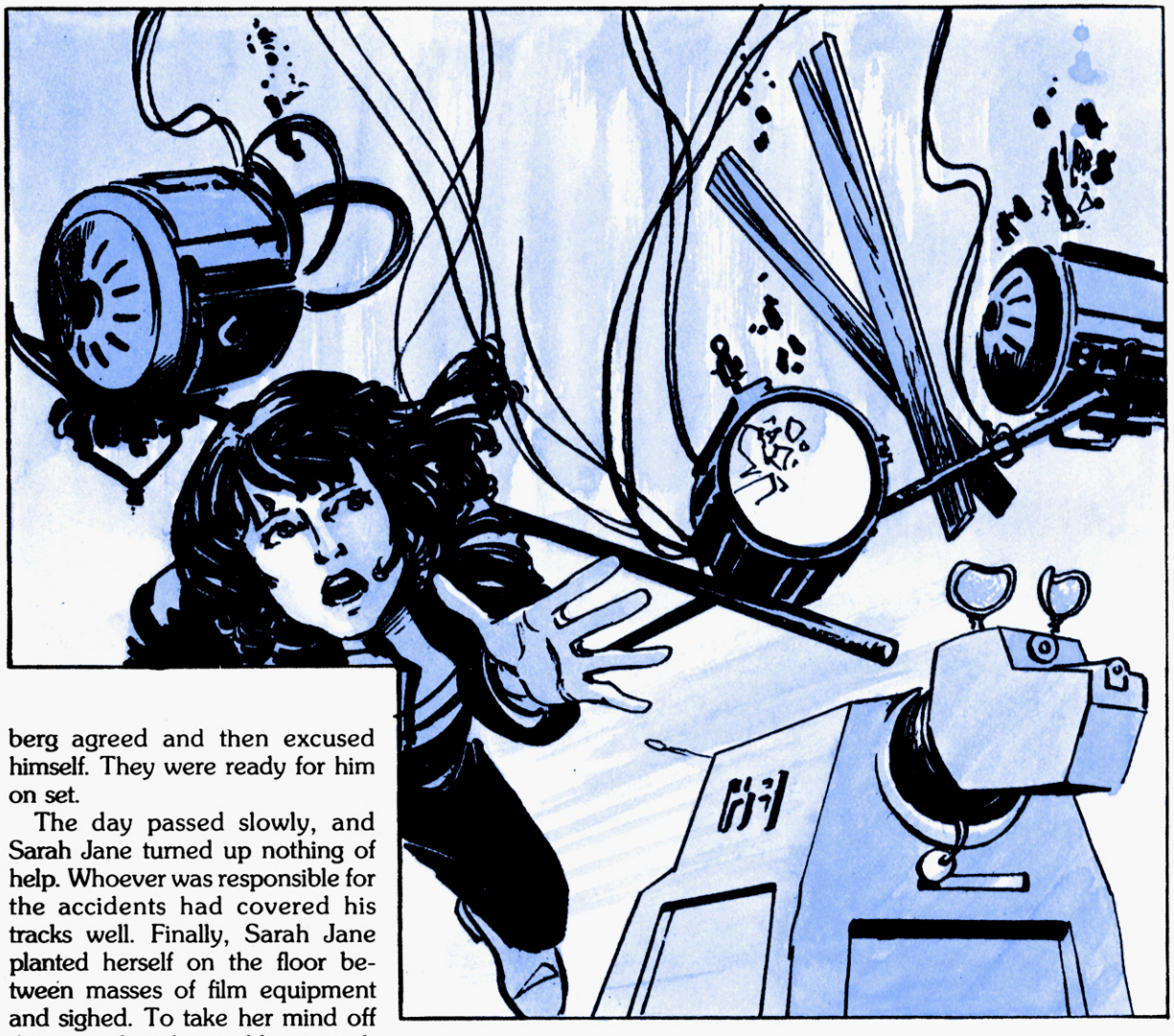
cried, but whatever else she was going to say was cut short as her attacker slammed into her. Sarah Jane gasped in pain and fell back against the balcony railing. She heard the now familiar splintering of wood. She was going to be pushed over!

Then, as quickly as it had started, it was all over. Sarah Jane heard the sound of K9's stun beam firing and felt her attacker fall back. Quickly, she rolled away from the edge. Clutching his arm, her attacker staggered off into the dark.

"Attacker escaping, Mistress," said K9. "I will pursue."

"No, K9!" shouted Sarah Jane. "You'll never catch him now." Slowly, she stood up, rubbing her aching back. "There's nothing more we can do tonight. Let's go back to bed." Despite what had happened, Sarah Jane could not stifle a yawn.

The next morning, the house was once again full of the hustle and bustle of a film crew at work. Sarah Jane came down to be met by George Spielberg, and she told him of the night's events. Once he had expressed his concern, Sarah Jane asked permission to nose around on the set while the day's scenes were being filmed. Spiel-



berg agreed and then excused himself. They were ready for him on set.

The day passed slowly, and Sarah Jane turned up nothing of help. Whoever was responsible for the accidents had covered his tracks well. Finally, Sarah Jane planted herself on the floor between masses of film equipment and sighed. To take her mind off things so that she could approach the problem afresh later, she began to watch the filming. "I think they're setting up for the sacrifice scene, K9," she said.

The lights on the set dimmed. In the middle of the floor, a technician turned on a 'dry-ice' machine. Clouds of fog-like vapour started to flow around a group of actors garbed in ominous monk's habits. Out of the corner of her eye, Sarah Jane saw the actor playing Azaroth, working his way around the edge of the set. As usual, he was in full costume, his face hidden beneath the goat-like mask.

"Action!" yelled George Spielberg, and the actors began to chant and wave their arms. Sarah Jane was soon engrossed in the fictional world.

"Look out!" someone shouted. "Get away from there!"

The warning had to be shouted a second time before Sarah Jane realised they were calling to her. Quickly she turned, and looked where they were pointing. The support on one of the 'brutes' – the immense lights used on a film set – had been released. It was falling right on top of her! Instinctively, Sarah Jane somersaulted out of the way. She cleared herself just in time. With a resounding crash, the 'brute' hit the floor. Metal buckled. Shards of hot glass exploded all over the set. Electrical wires sparked as connections were ripped apart.

Sarah Jane knew full well that if her reactions hadn't been so good there would hardly have been enough left of her to identify!

Through the chaos on what remained of the set, George Spielberg ran over to Sarah Jane. "Are you alright?" he cried.

Sarah Jane nodded, she had a scratch on her leg, but that was all.

"What happened?" gasped Spielberg.

"Another 'accident', George. Someone just tried to kill me." Sarah Jane took a deep breath. "And I think I know who. Come on, George," she said, "we're going to have a chat with our friend Azaroth!"

Miles Bracken, the actor who played Azaroth, could not be found anywhere on the set or in the house. Conveniently, he seemed to have disappeared. But Sarah Jane was determined to challenge him with her suspicions, and, obtaining his home address from Spielberg's records, she, K9 and Spielberg himself drove over in her car.

"Impossible!" shouted Bracken.

"That's a ridiculous accusation!"

Sarah Jane stared at him. "Why?"

"Because," Bracken declared, getting increasingly angry, "I haven't been near the set!" He turned to Spielberg. "You cancelled my contract, remember!" Bracken took a letter from a drawer and shoved it in Spielberg's face; it was a letter stating that Bracken's services would not be required after all. It was on the film company's official letterhead. "Satisfied?" hissed Bracken.

Suddenly, the reason why Azaroth was never seen without his mask on set hit Sarah Jane. Azaroth was an imposter! But who? Apologising to Bracken, she turned to Spielberg. "Come on, George," she said. "We'll start all over again."

As they reached the door, Bracken broke into one more angry outburst. "If you're going to point the finger of accusation at anyone," he bawled, "point it at the writer of your film, Richard Kenyon!"

Sarah Jane stopped. "What makes you say that?"

Bracken faltered. "Don't you know?" he said incredulously. "His real name isn't Kenyon. It's De'Ath! He changed it by deed poll twenty years ago. Richard De'Ath was the high priest of the Azaroth cult!"

Sarah Jane took a second to absorb the revelation. Then, she turned to Spielberg and said: "George, ring De'Ath. Make some excuse to meet him at the house. We're going to set a trap!"

By the time Sarah Jane, K9 and Spielberg returned to the house, most of the film crew had left for the day. The sun was already almost below the horizon. Night was creeping in. The house was silent and dark. "Caution is advised, Mistress," said K9.

Switching on the lights, Sarah Jane moved into the main room. The floor was obscured by a layer of white mist. The dry-ice machine had been turned on!

"Someone has a sense of the dramatic," said Sarah Jane. She looked at her watch. According to her calculations, De'Ath should have arrived about half-an-hour before them. Plenty of time to prepare some 'accidents'. "Be careful," she said.

"Sarah!" cried Spielberg.

Sarah Jane spun. At the other end of the room, Richard De'Ath sat in a large armchair looking at them. His hands were folded in his lap.

Sarah Jane walked over to him. Even before she reached him, she

knew something was wrong. There was something odd about the way his head hung, something strange about his eyes. Sarah Jane soon knew what it was. His neck was broken. Richard De'Ath was dead!

"Fools!" someone shouted from the balcony. "You're all fools!"

Sarah Jane and Spielberg looked up in shock. Azaroth stood above them, a flaming torch in each hand. He was laughing like a maniac. Azaroth lowered the torches and held them beneath drapes that hung at either end of the balcony. They caught immediately, and within seconds tendrils of fire had started to creep up to and along the surrounding woodwork. "This place is a tinderbox!" yelled Spielberg. "It'll go up like a bomb! We have to get out of here!"

"Don't move!" warned Azaroth. He was pointing a gun.

"Who are you?" pleaded Spielberg. "Why are you doing this?"

Azaroth laughed again, and lifted his other arm to pull off the goat-like mask. Spielberg and Sarah Jane gasped in horror. It was Jill Grant, the production secretary!

"Why?" she shouted. "Because of him!" She pointed at De'Ath. "Twenty years ago, two people disappeared after attending one of his coven meetings. They were my parents! After that night I never saw either of them again! After that night I swore I would get revenge!"

Spielberg looked over at De'Ath's body. "Well, now you have," he said, "but why all the accidents? Why kill us?"

"To cover her tracks," interrupted Sarah Jane. "De'Ath's death will just be another in a line of unfortunate 'accidents'. Some people may even believe it was the curse of Azaroth. There's no way the police will be able to determine the cause of this fire. She may be mad, but she's clever!"

"Mad!" screamed Jill Grant. "You dare to call me mad!" She began to make her way down off the balcony and towards them.

Sarah Jane's comment had had just the effect that she had hoped for. By becoming angry, Jill Grant had thrown herself off guard.

"Now, K9!" Sarah Jane yelled. "Fire!"

"Affirmative, Mistress," responded K9. A thin red stun beam shot from his snout, hitting Jill Grant in the stomach. With a howl of pain she stumbled backwards, tripping on the top few stairs of the balcony.

"Watch out!" warned Sarah Jane... but it was too late.

In her last few seconds of consciousness, Jill Grant grasped blindly at the remains of the drapes, only to find that they tore away from their fastenings. With a shocked yell of protest, she tipped completely off balance and sailed out into the air above the stairs, landing a moment later at their base.

"The window, George!" Sarah Jane shouted, aware that the fire was getting out of control. "Smash the window!"

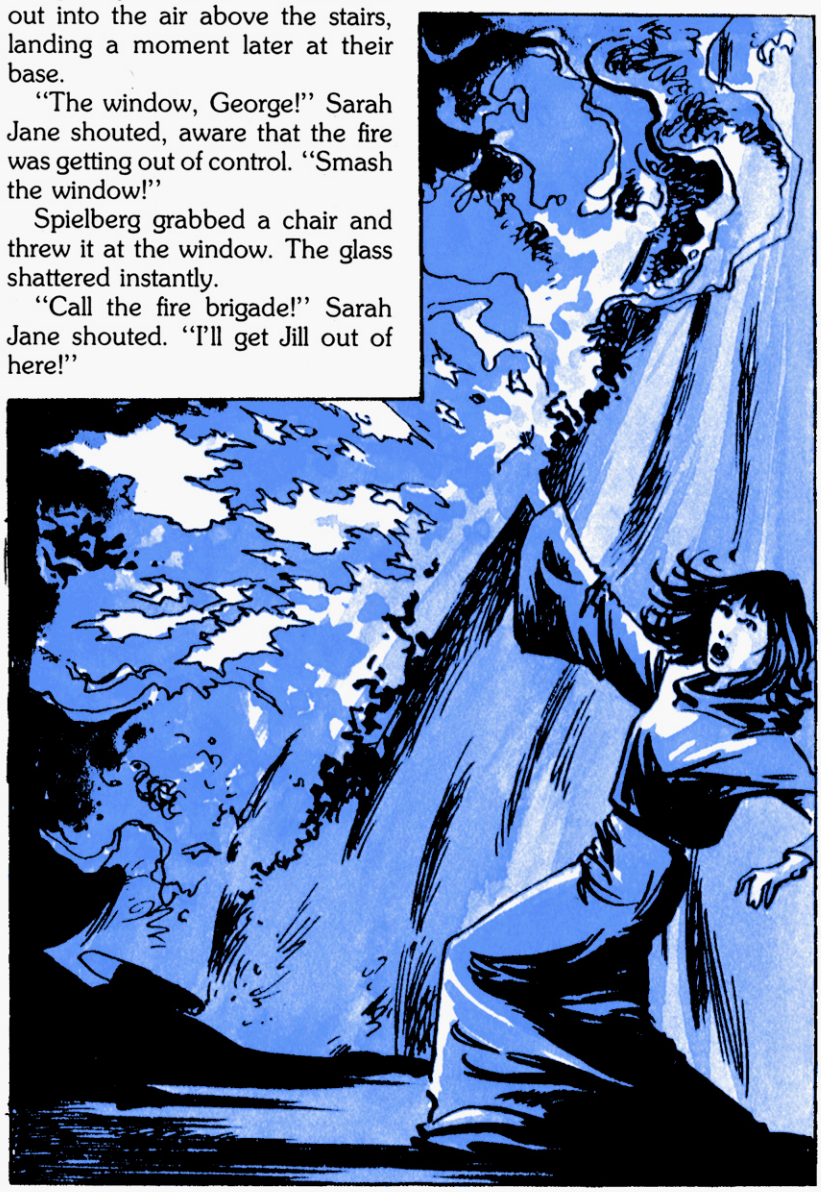
Spielberg grabbed a chair and threw it at the window. The glass shattered instantly.

"Call the fire brigade!" Sarah Jane shouted. "I'll get Jill out of here!"

With a nod, Spielberg exited through the window. Sarah Jane began to work her way over to the unconscious girl.

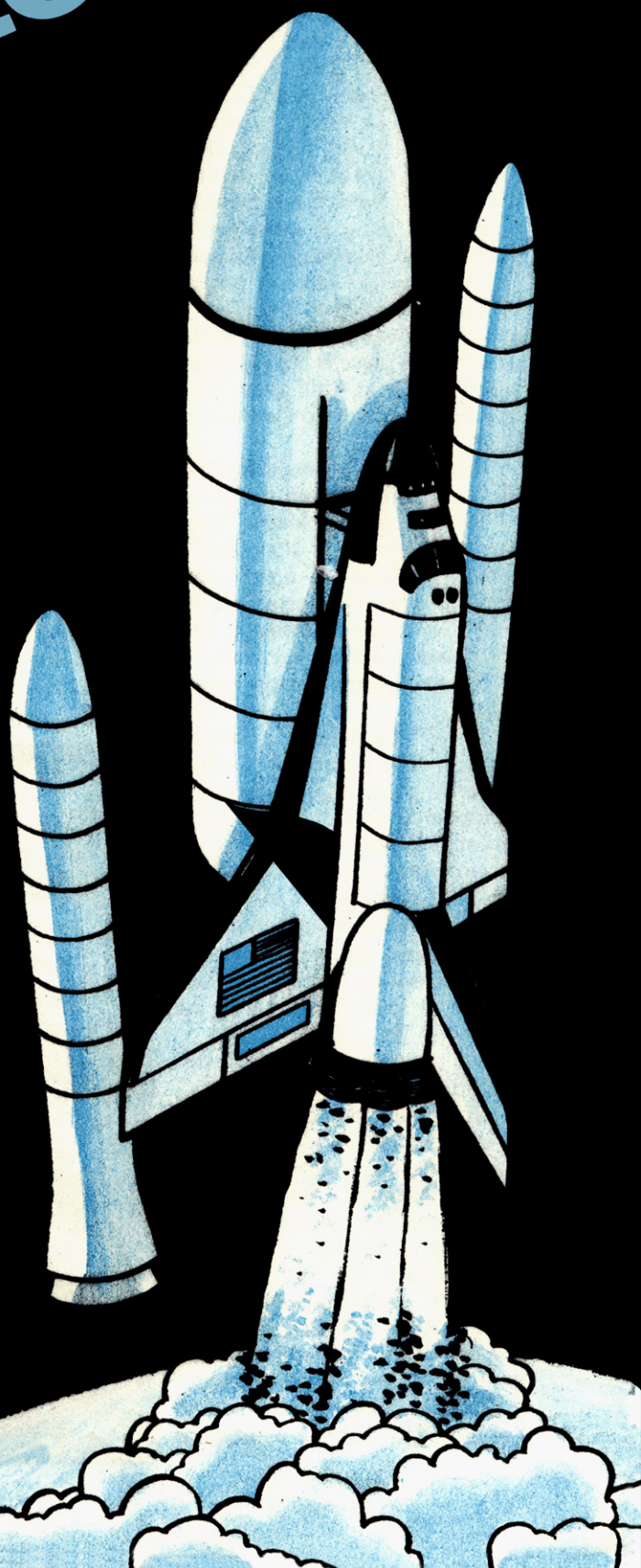
Later, the three of them sat on the grass outside. It was all over. Jill Grant had been taken to hospital. The body of Richard De'Ath had been rescued from the flames. Only the house itself continued to burn.

"You know," said Spielberg, "fact is sometimes stranger than fiction." He paused. "According to legend, the only way to end the curse of Azaroth was to cleanse it. Cleanse it by fire!" He looked back at the remains of the De'Ath ancestral home, spitting and crackling in the cold night air.



TALKING OF TECHNOLOGY

Let's take a look at some new developments in science and technology.



WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT SPACE?

The Space Shuttle has opened up fantastic new possibilities for space exploration, and also for using the environment of space for setting up laboratories and even small factory units, working on projects which are difficult to manage on earth.

But why is it easier to work with them in space?

Well, in fact there are several reasons.

One of the most important concerns the state of weightlessness, which does not exist on earth because of the forces of gravity. This means that materials can be made in space inside containers, but free of any contact with the surfaces of these containers. Absolute purity of these substances can therefore be guaranteed. Completely new alloys could be developed, and substances such as a foam steel, which would be so light that it would float on water. Crystals for use in electronic equipment can also be grown much larger in orbit.

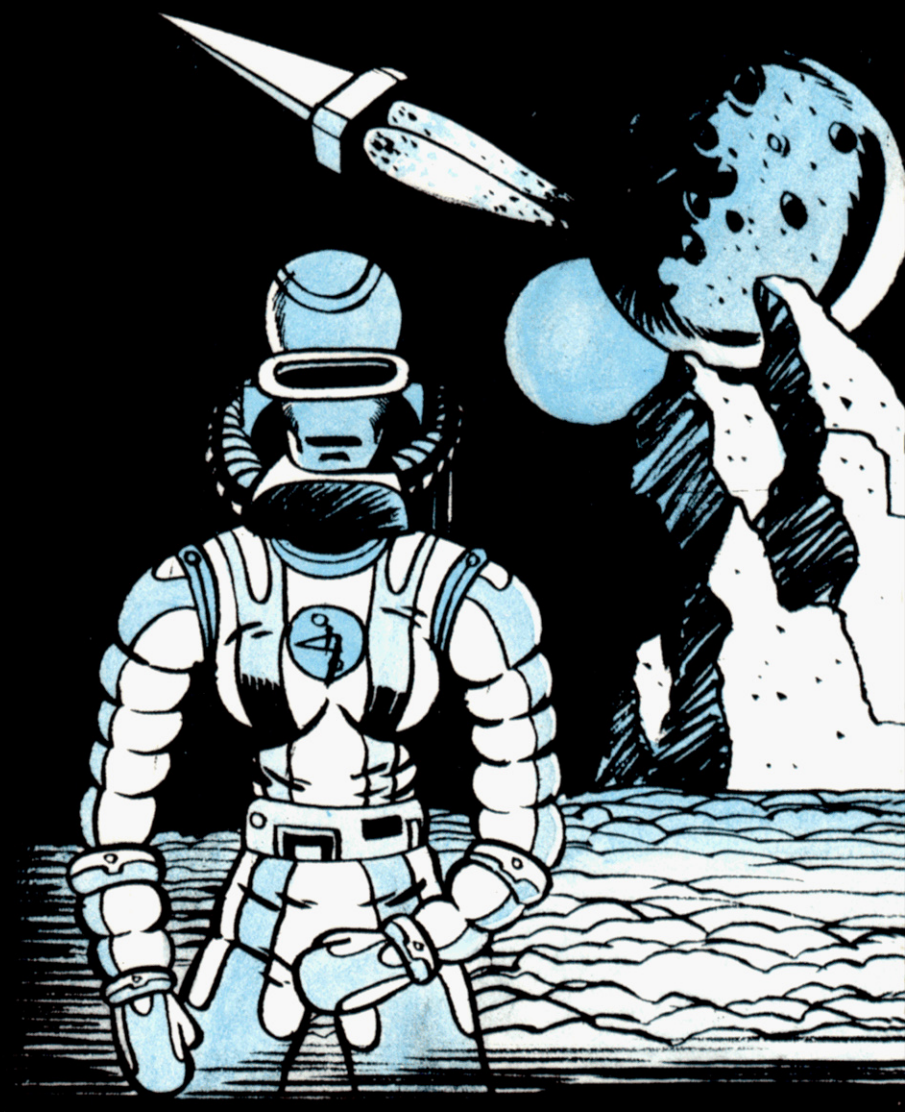
There are also two other major advantages to working in space. First, there is all that free energy, in the shape of unlimited sunlight. And then there is direct access to a state of vacuum, which is necessary for many industrial processes.

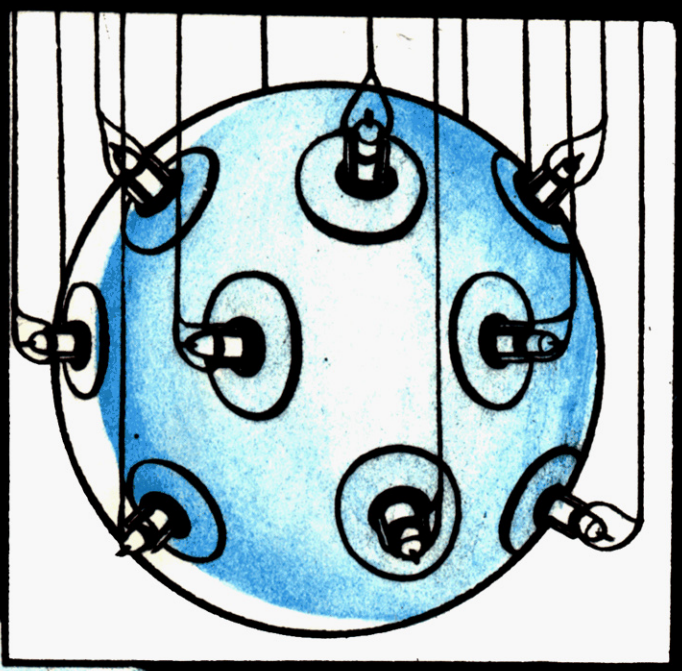
ARE YOU STILL THERE?

Making contact with intelligent alien life on other planets has long been a dream of many scientists. Of course, we do not really know if such life forms really exist, but there is always a possibility.

In 1974 a message was sent from a giant radio telescope in Puerto Rico, to Messier 13, a star cluster on the edge of our galaxy. The message contained information about ourselves, and it would obviously be fantastically exciting if we were ever to receive an answer. We might have to wait a while though . . .

Messier 13 is so far away that the message will take 24,000 years to get there.





FUSION OR FISSION?

There is a great deal of controversy about the pros and cons of nuclear power, with the main argument concerning the dangerous radio-active wastes which the process produces, which will not be safe for hundreds, even thousands, of years.

An alternative for future reactors might be the process of nuclear fusion, rather than fission. Various types of reactors working on this principle are at present under investigation and development, and in one example a laser beam is used to crush pellets of deuterium. Under this crushing pressure the atoms are fused together, giving off immense heat, which turns water to steam. The steam is used to spin electric turbines, generating electricity.

Two main advantages of this process are that it produces little radio-active waste, and also that the fuel, deuterium, comes from sea water, which is easily available.

HOUND OF HELL

megaliths that was Druid's Ring stood out against the night sky, silhouetted by the almost full moon. It was a grim reminder that Midsummer's Night, the time when those who worshipped the dark forces practised their summer solstice ceremonies, was only twenty-four hours away! Sarah Jane shivered. Even now a small group of hooded figures was moving about within the ring, preparing for the night of evil that was soon to come.

"Shh, Brendan," whispered Sarah Jane. "They might hear you."

Brendan froze, one foot resting on solid ground, the other half lifted out of the marshy ground into which it had sunk a second earlier.

"Sorry, Sarah," he whispered back, "but I can't help it. You can't tell what's marsh and what isn't." With a cautious look around, he slowly lifted the trapped foot. It came free of the mud with a horrible squelching sound. Brendan winced. "If you think I'm having problems, look at K9. He's just not built for this sort of thing!"

Sarah Jane turned and looked back beyond Brendan. K9 was trying to work his way towards them from a few yards back. His sensor probe was extended from his snout, and he moved slowly and erratically. Sarah Jane knew that he was trying to determine whether the ground ahead of him was solid. It was a difficult task; more than once that night K9 had accidentally slipped into the soft mud, and it had taken all of Sarah Jane and Brendan's strength to pull him out again.

Sarah Jane squinted through the darkness, picking out the solid ground. "To your left, K9," she directed, "just a little. That's it." At first she had tried to carry him, but the topography of the area coupled with the camera equipment that she carried had made it impossible. Getting to Druid's Ring, for K9, Brendan and herself, was turning out to be one hard slog. Eventually, though, K9 successfully traversed the last few feet, and he rolled up beside them. "Continue, Mistress," he said.

Sarah Jane looked ahead of her. No more than a hundred yards away, the circle of ancient

"No, K9," Sarah Jane decided, "this is as far as we go. We can't risk being spotted." She unslung the camera from around her neck. "You two keep a look out," she said to K9 and Brendan, "I'll get this on film."

Through the zoom lens on her camera, Sarah Jane got a much better view of the activities within the ring. There were five people in all, unidentifiable beneath their satanist's robes, and they seemed to be building some sort of effigy from branches and stones. It was probably going to become the centre-piece of the following night's ceremony. Sarah Jane concentrated on it, and shot off a string of photographs. It was the likeness of a dog... a giant, ominous hound of hell!

Suddenly, from behind Sarah Jane, there came a startled gasp. Sarah Jane turned. While trying to wipe mud off K9's body, Brendan had lost his balance. Too far over to recover, he was falling headlong into the marsh! The splash and gasp of pain he gave in landing cut through the silence of the night!

"Brendan, no!" yelled Sarah Jane, but she knew that the damage had already been done. Cries of discovery and warning echoed from Druid's Ring. They had been spotted! "Come on!" screamed Sarah Jane. "We've got to get out of here!"

Reslinging her camera, Sarah Jane leapt up from her hiding place. Already she could see the hooded figures racing towards them. Each one held something in his hand. The first shot rang out through the night, and a bullet impacted not six feet away! "Guns!" yelled Sarah Jane. "They've got guns!"

Despite the difficulty he had had earlier, Brendan flew out of the marsh like a tornado. Sarah Jane yelled at him to get moving. Brendan began to run. With a cry of, "Come on, K9!" Sarah Jane followed. Another shot rang out.

Racing back across the marsh proved to be far more difficult than walking across it. There was no time to decide which paths to take. Both Brendan and Sarah Jane found that they stumbled every few yards. The satanists, obviously more used to the terrain, began to gain ground fast.

Sarah Jane stared ahead as she

ran, desperately trying to pick out the bordering road where she had left the car. She couldn't see it anywhere! A bullet thudded into a small mound next to her, sending a spray of soil and grass into the air. Swerving to avoid it, Sarah Jane tripped on a clump of coarse marshweed. The wind was knocked out of her as she collided with the ground. Brendan turned to look back. "Keep running!" shouted Sarah Jane, her breath catching in her throat.

"But K9!" yelled Brendan, looking even further back.

Sarah Jane rolled around, suddenly realising how much difficulty her computerised companion must be having. K9 had stopped and turned back towards the satanists!

"K9!" Sarah Jane yelled, "what are you doing?"

"Rapid motion over this terrain impossible for this machine, Mistress," he responded. "Current position held."

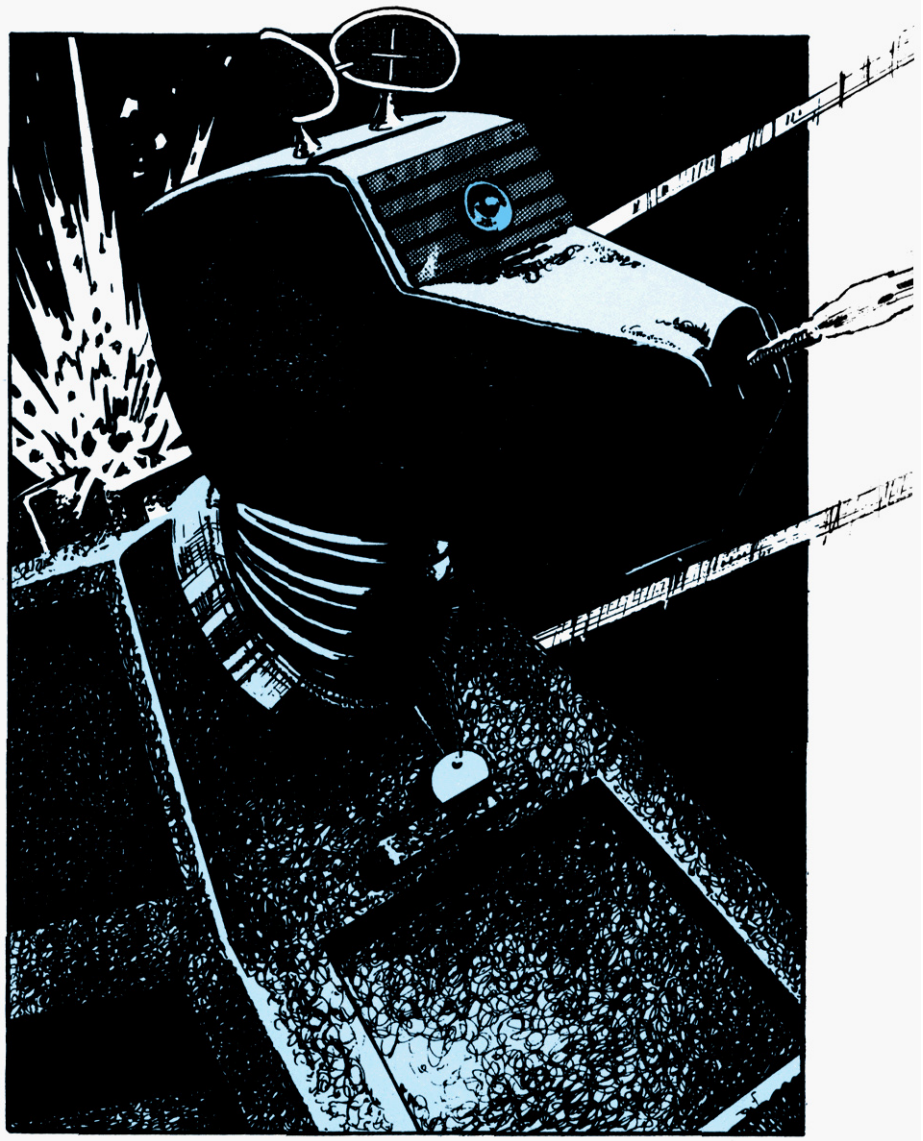
"No, K9!" objected Sarah Jane. "I'm not leaving you!"

But K9 had other ideas. His primary programme was to protect his mistress, and that was just what he intended to do. As Sarah Jane watched, stun beam after stun beam shot from his snout. One satanist doubled over and fell into the marsh. "Twenty percent reduction in enemy attack potential," K9 declared. "Will continue offensive." K9 began to fire again.

K9's second attack brought a wave of retaliation. Now able to determine his position, the satanists let off a volley of gunfire. Bullets hit the ground all around K9. He fired again, downing another of the satanists and drawing even more fire.

Sarah Jane had to dive for cover to avoid any possible ricochets. "Leave it, K9!" she shouted. "One shot could..!"

But her cry came too late. Another hail of bullets came screaming through the air, and this time they hit their target! K9 rocked with the impact as one bullet slammed into his side and one into his back. Sparks burst from the holes left by both! "Damage, Mistress!" K9 announced, but he continued to fire back.



Sarah Jane felt her heart leap into her throat. K9 was hit! Desperately, she began to scramble towards him, bullets raining around her. "How bad, K9?" she yelled.

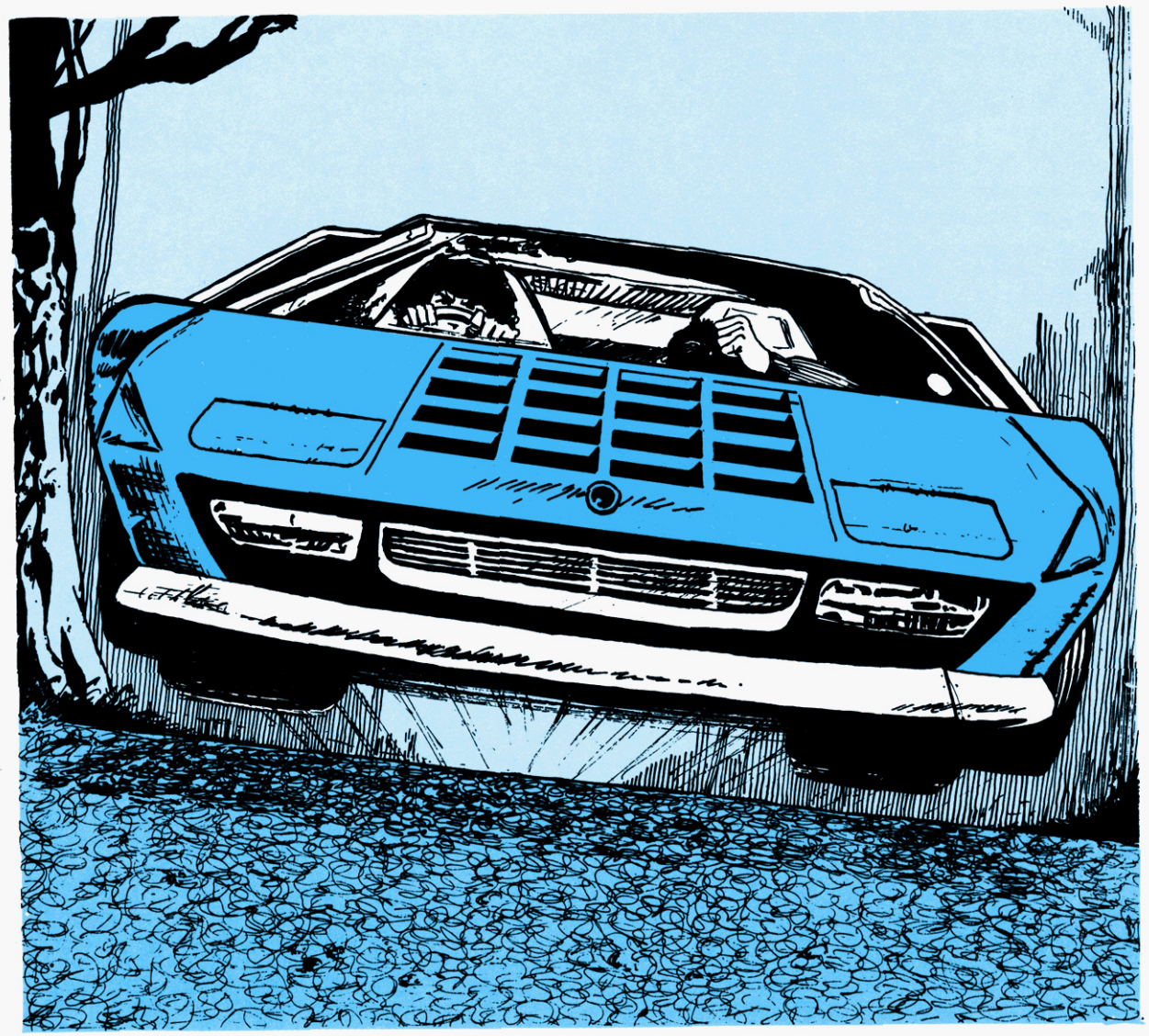
"Not incapacitated, Mis..." K9 began, but he did not finish. Another bullet smashed into his side, enlarging the earlier hole. More sparks shot from it. As Sarah Jane gaped in horror, K9's head drooped, and he did not say another thing.

"No!" Sarah Jane screamed.

"Sarah, this way!" Brendan shouted. "The car!"

Sarah Jane stared over at him, not really taking in what he had said. Then it hit her: the car! They might escape after all! Knowing that she had no choice, Sarah Jane took a deep breath and grabbed the lifeless K9, hoisting him up into her arms. He was heavy, very heavy, but she had to get him out of there. Bullets hurtling into the marsh around her, Sarah Jane started to run for Brendan and the car.

Just as Sarah Jane, K9 and Brendan finally reached the road, the satanists came pouring over a nearby rise. For a second or two it seemed to Brendan that their luck had run out but somehow Sarah Jane managed to fling open the car door and drop K9 onto the back seat. Brendan leapt into the passenger side while Sarah Jane revved the cold engine into life. 'Go!' thought Brendan. 'Go!' Sarah Jane slipped into gear and



slammed her foot down on the accelerator.

With a screech of tyres, the car shot off down the road. Brendan exhaled slowly and rested his head on the dashboard in relief. In the rear view mirror the satanists dwindled out of existence.

"Just how serious is it?" asked Sarah Jane later, her concern for K9 obvious in her voice.

Brendan sighed and rubbed tired eyes. "I really don't know," he said helplessly.

K9 lay before him, his computerised innards showing through open access panels of all shapes and sizes. Tools were scattered all about. Brendan had been working on him all night, but even now, with early morning sunlight streaming in through the windows of the manor house, K9 seemed no nearer repair.

"The trouble is," Brendan said, wearily probing K9's circuits with a screwdriver, "that K9 is the result of technology hundreds of years ahead of our own. Normally his auto-repair capabilities would deal with the problem themselves, but with the damage being what it is..." Brendan trailed off and sat back, obviously exhausted.

Aunt Lavinia, who had been watching all along, but no longer seemed to be content to do so, rose from her chair. "Right," she said, "that's it. You both need rest. Up to bed, and no arguments!"

Sarah Jane and Brendan started to protest, but Aunt Lavinia stopped them. "You said yourself that there's little you can do, and whatever you can do will be done better after you've had some sleep." She pointed to the stairs. "Go!"

Aunt Lavinia was right as usual. Sarah Jane felt half-dead, and Brendan was more dead than alive. Reluctantly, the pair of them got up and walked to the door. "Aunt Lavinia," said Sarah Jane, "look after K9."

Aunt Lavinia smiled. "He'll be safe with me," she said.

Sarah Jane had no idea how long she slept, but when she finally awoke darkness had replaced daylight outside the window of her room. She snapped awake. It was night! Midsummer's Night! She had to return to Druid's Ring! Then she remembered K9 and the events of the night before, and all

thoughts of returning to the marsh to complete her exposé of the satanists drained from her mind. She couldn't think of anything but getting K9 back to normal. Slowly, she got up and dressed, then began to make her way downstairs. Brendan joined her on the landing.

"K9 is gone," said Aunt Lavinia when they walked into the sitting room. "I couldn't stop him."

Joy and worry flooded through Sarah Jane at the same time. Joy that K9 had apparently recovered; worry because he had seemingly gone off on his own devices, something that he would not normally do without telling her first. "Why?" she asked numbly. "What happened?"

"That's that strange thing," explained Aunt Lavinia. "One moment he was like he'd been all day, the next he was off and moving across the room!"

"Well," said Brendan, "it seems as if I did him some good after all. By the sound of it I repaired enough damage for his auto-repair circuits to take over and complete the job. It was hit-and-miss, but it seems to have worked!" Brendan smiled, pleased with his handywork. "Did he say anything?"

"Two things," said Aunt Lavinia. "'Data required' when he first started to move, and 'Cease interference' when I tried to stop him leaving. He was quite adamant about it!"

"Oh-oh," said Brendan, his smile disappearing, "I don't like the sound of that."

"That doesn't sound like K9 at all!" said Sarah Jane.

"That's what I'm worried about," Brendan went on. "One thing I did notice when I was trying to repair him was that there was some damage to his memory banks. It sounds like they're still malfunctioning."

"Which means what?" questioned Sarah Jane.

Brendan frowned. "One, that he may not know who he is. Two, that his behavioural pattern may have altered. Three," he concluded grimly, "that he may not know who *we* are!"

"Will it be permanent?" Sarah Jane asked.

Brendan shook his head. "No," he said, "the auto-repair circuits will rectify the fault eventually. But until they do, K9 will be confused, possibily even dangerous. We have to find him."

"But where, dear," Aunt Lavinia said, "where?"

"I think I may know," said Brendan. "Come on, Sarah, get the car!"

Brendan was working on the theory that K9's computer mind, in its faulty state, would latch onto its

most recent experiences in order to repair itself, rather like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw – and based on that theory there was only one place he could have possibly headed for: Bodmin Marshes, the location of Druid's Ring!

Sarah Jane parked the car a little way along the road from where they had been the previous night, and the two of them got out and surveyed the view in front of them. The marsh shone in the half-light of the full moon. The lights of flaming torches flickered in the distance.

Sarah Jane looked at her watch; it was half past eleven. She knew that at this time the satanist ceremony would be in full swing, and that it would be extremely dangerous to go closer, but if K9 *was* out on the marsh she had to risk it.

"Brendan," she said, "go and call the police. Get them out here. I'm going in."

Brendan started to object, but there was no way that Sarah Jane was going to endanger her young friend's life again and she soon persuaded him. As Brendan began to trudge along to the nearest call box, Sarah Jane started to pick her way out across the marsh.

She had gone no more than ten yards when a satanist appeared behind her! "Back again?" he said, rhetorically. "This time you won't get away!"

Sarah Jane awoke with a moan, the lump on her head throbbing painfully. The satanist had hit her – *hard!* Dimly, she was aware that her hands and feet were tied. Dreading what she might see, she opened her eyes.

Sarah Jane was laid out on a sacrificial stone in the centre of Druid's Ring. Satanists circled her, each one holding a flaming torch in his hand. Druid's Ring was alight with the glow they gave, and it echoed with the sound of chanting. Sarah Jane swallowed hard. This time she was *really* in a mess! She strained to see beyond the circle of hooded figures for any sign of Brendan and the police.

"Ragok!" shouted one of the satanists. "Ragok!"

At the sound of the cry a hush descended over the ring. All the satanists froze in their tracks. Then the cry began again, only this time it was repeated over and over by every satanist present. The circle of figures blocking Sarah Jane's view parted. Sarah Jane gasped in shock and horror.

Where the likeness of a hound of hell had been the night before, sat K9! The effigy of sticks and stones had been removed, and K9 had been positioned in its place! "Ragok!" came the cry again. "Ragok!"

Sarah Jane's mind swam. She knew enough about the ceremony to know that Ragok was the name of the hound of hell supposedly worshipped that night, but the satanists were calling K9 by that

name! What was going on? "K9!" she cried.

K9 made no sound of recognition. It was obvious that he had still not fully recovered. Suddenly, Sarah Jane realised what must have happened. K9 had been with her when she had researched into Ragok, the details would have been absorbed into his memory banks! In his confused state of mind K9 had probably identified with the legend of the hound of hell! K9 thought he was Ragok!

"No, K9!" Sarah Jane cried. "No!"

A hand slapped down over Sarah Jane's mouth. "Midnight approaches!" shouted the satanist responsible. "It is the time of the sacrifice!"

'Sacrifice,' thought Sarah Jane. That had to mean her! Desperately she began to struggle against her bonds. Above her, the satanist produced a long, gleaming knife from his robes. Sarah Jane stared up in horror. The knife was poised above her, glinting in the torchlight. She only had seconds! In one last, desperate gamble, Sarah Jane bit the hand that was clamped over her mouth. It was snatched away.

"K9!" she screamed, "it's Sarah Jane! Sarah Jane! Remember, K9! Remember!"

There was no response. The hand slammed back down across Sarah Jane's mouth. Terrified and gasping for breath, she realised that she was losing consciousness. Her last sight was of the knife arcing down towards her, and then everything went black.

"Sarah?" said a voice. "Sarah?"

Sarah Jane slowly opened her eyes. Brendan and a police officer were looking down at her and smiling. Sarah Jane lifted her arm and realised that she had been untied. It was all over! "What happened?" she said weakly.

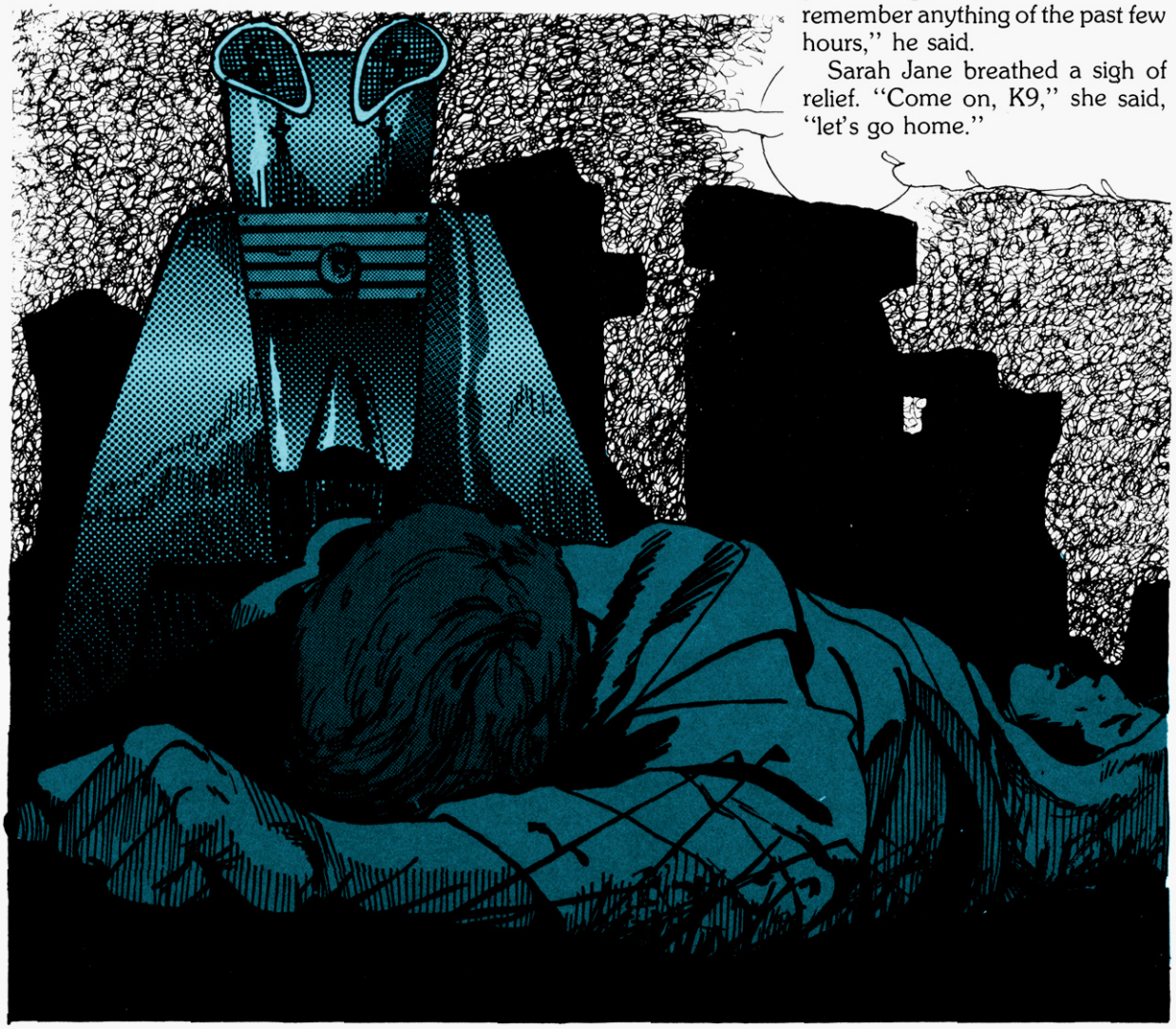
"You got throught to K9 just in time," said Brendan. "It's because of him you're still in the land of the living."

Sarah Jane sat up and looked about her. The stunned bodies of at least ten satanists lay on the ground. K9 was poised above them. "K9, it *is* you!" shouted Sarah Jane.

"Affirmative, Mistress," responded K9. "Why should it not be me?"

Brendan caught Sarah Jane's puzzled glance. "He doesn't remember anything of the past few hours," he said.

Sarah Jane breathed a sigh of relief. "Come on, K9," she said, "let's go home."



K9's QUIZ

K9 knows all there is to know about science, the stars and space. How many of these questions from his memory banks can you answer?

1
It was discovered on 13th March 1781 by William Herschel, who at first believed it to be a comet. For some time it was known variously as Hypercronius, the Georgian Planet (in honour of Herschel's patron, King George III), or simply Herschel. In 1850 it was given the name by which we know it today. What is the name of this planet?

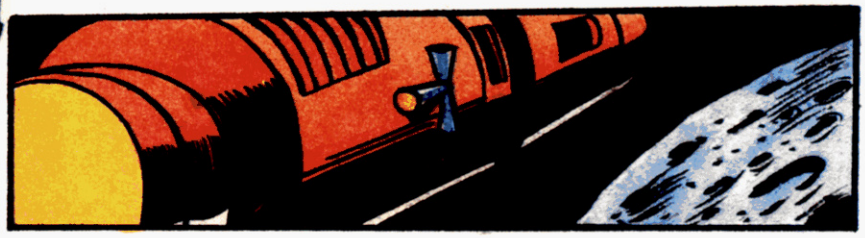
2
What is The Green Flash?

3
When did Neil Armstrong first step onto the surface of the Moon? Who was his co-astronaut, and what was the name of their spacecraft?

4
The 200in. Hale reflector at Palomar Mountain in California is widely thought of as being the largest in the world, but in actual fact it is only the largest in the Western Hemisphere. Do you know where the largest optical telescope in the world is located?

5
Who was John Couch Adams?

6
What is the name of the star constellation named after the beautiful daughter of King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeia in mythology?



7
What is the Big Bang Theory?

8
What does the phrase: 'Wow! Oh Be A Fine Girl and Kiss Me Right Now Sweetie' have to do with studying the stars?

9
What was the 'Lunar Hoax' of 1835?

10
This French astronomer began his career at Marseilles observatory, in the role of caretaker! He was self-taught, and concentrated on looking for comets. He found 36, and was eventually made Director of the Museum Observatory in Florence. What was his name?

ANSWERS

1. Uranus, 2. The Green Flash is an atmospheric effect when the Sun sinks below the horizon. Just occasionally, the last segment of it may flash brilliant green for a second. 3. Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the Moon on 21st July 1969. His companion was Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin, and the mission was Apollo 11. 4. The 236.2in. reflector telescope is at Mount Semirodriki, Caucasus, USSR. 5. He was an English astronomer, who lived from 1819 to 1892. He graduated brilliantly from Cambridge in 1843, and later became director of the Cambridge Observatory. 6. Andromeda. 7. It is a theory that the Universe began from the explosion of a 'primeval fireball', and that expansion will continue indefinitely. 8. This odd phrase provides a way of remembering the classification letters of the various types of stars, beginning with the very hot stars, which are know as W stars. 9. It was a hoax perpetrated by the New York Sun newspaper, when they published imaginary reports of life on the Moon, including descriptions of bat-men. 10. Jean Louis Pons who lived from 1761 to 1831.

All over Europe stand the mysterious Stone Age megaliths which we have come to know as 'standing stones'. But just exactly for what purpose were they put there?

What is the Secret of the Standing Stones?

There are at least 50,000 standing stone sites in Europe, where great stones form rows, circles, ovals, crosses, horseshoes or straight lines. They are in varying degrees of preservation, and we do not know how many more may have been completely destroyed by man, or by the effects of nature.

Stonehenge is probably the best known site, while the rows of stones at Carnac, numbering more than 3,000, are a popular attraction for visitors to France.

Sophisticated dating techniques have revealed that the various groups of standing stones were set up over a period of more than 2,000 years, ending around 1500BC. This has ruled out a theory once common, which was that they were built by the Celtic priests who were known as the Druids, and used as part of their pagan rights.

Now that we know that the stones are much earlier than that, it seems even more remarkable that such simple people should have used such incredible amounts of time and energy hewing out gigantic boulders of rock, often transporting them many miles without the help of any wheeled vehicles, and finally erecting them in such precise formations. They must have had a purpose.

Much research has been done in recent years which points to the possibility that the stones were used as astronomical observatories, and that they collected information which would be of value to farming and seafaring peoples. Scientists who have studied the sight lines between the sun and moon and various points in the stone structures at Stonehenge have been amazed at the accuracy of the information given in this way, almost as if the stones could be used as some strange kind of computer.

Other modern day researchers go further, and suggest that the stones could have been set up with the help of extra-terrestrial beings, who came to Earth and imparted some of their superior knowledge to the primitives they found here. There is even a theory which suggests that circles such as Stonehenge, for instance, could in some way have stored energy which could be used to power spacecraft.

Another theory which might seem fanciful to us concerns the indisputable fact that some of the standing stones throughout Europe can be seen to line up with one another, when plotted on a map. There are those who believe that the stones were—or even are—linked by **ley lines**, which are invisible lines

of force sending beneficial beams of energy across the countryside.

Fanciful it might seem, but consider for a moment that we are looking at this theory from the point of view of modern man, who lives in cities and has all the miracles of science at his disposal. Early man was more in tune with the rhythms of nature, and it is possible that he was able to sense much more than we are able to. He may have used, in other words, the mysterious sixth sense which is so often speculated about today.

Looking again at Stonehenge, we know that there were three distinct stages in its building, and that these stages spanned an incredible 1,000 years or more.

The first workers were the Neolithic people who began the construction around 2700BC, and amongst other things they set up the famous Heelstone, which lines up with the Midsummer's Day sunrise from the centre of the circles.

The second section was built some 800 years later by the people we know as the Beaker People (so named from their habit of burying pottery with their dead). It was the Beaker People who brought the giant bluestones, each weighing more than four tons, from the Prescelly Hills in South Wales, which was a distance of some 200 miles or more.

Most remarkable of all, however, was stage three of the construction, which probably took place around 1500BC. This was when the giant sarsen stones, each weighing up to 50 tons, were placed in position after their 20 mile journey from where they were hewn. We do not know exactly how they were moved, but calculations would indicate that as many as 1,000 men would be needed to haul them across country, using sledges.

Once at the site the stones would have to be worked until they were the required shape—and sarsen is the hardest of all British stones to work—and then would come the business of placing them in their required positions, possibly using timber ramps and scaffolding.

How did primitive man manage such incredible feats of engineering? And why? How did the impetus to continue building keep the work going for a thousand years? And, because the evidence suggests that Stonehenge was never finished, why did they not complete their task?

We will probably never know the answers to all these puzzles. The strange secrets of the standing stones will stay locked inside those massive chunks of rock for years to come, and the stones themselves may outlive even our advanced civilization.

The Monster of LOCH CRAG

Susan Hamilton gasped in relief as the red public telephone box appeared out of the mist, its interior light acting as a beacon in the darkness. Desperately, the freezing night air searing her lungs, she stumbled towards it and pulled open the door, almost falling in. Somewhere outside, she could hear the ominous lapping of water on the banks of the loch, and the sound made her fumble with fear. She hadn't expected it to come to this. She hadn't expected to vanish like the others. But the *thing* was too clever, she knew that now. The *thing* was coming for her! Frantically, her fingers numb with cold, she snatched up the phone and started to dial. She had to contact Sarah . . .

Archie MacGibbon placed two drinks on the bar of the Stag Hotel and smiled. "Aye, that'll be one pound and tenpence please, Miss Smith."

"Thank you, Archie. One for yourself." Sarah Jane paid for the drinks and moved with them to a table in the corner of the lounge bar. Gently sipping her drink, she looked around the cosy, familiar room. Although it had been over five years since her last visit, Sarah Jane was happy to see that the place hadn't changed a bit. The traditional log fire still crackled hospitably in the grate next to her table, and the antiques with which she had become entranced long ago still adorned the walls. There was something about the tiny Scottish hamlet of Gillicuddy, something timeless that never failed to attract Sarah Jane. Here, she could forget all about the trials of being an investigative reporter and lose herself in happy holiday memories. She was glad that she had taken up the suggestion of her old friend, Susan Hamilton, and travelled up to the highlands for a few days rest. As soon as Susan arrived, Sarah Jane was looking forward to a good chat about old times.

"Telephone call for you, Miss Smith."

Sarah Jane looked over at Archie, questioningly. Who could be calling her here? Hoping that it wasn't about work, she moved over and took the phone from the old Scot. "Hello?"

"Sarah!"

Sarah Jane smiled, recognising the voice instantly. "Susan," she said, warmly, "where are you? I've got a drink waiting for you here."

"No time. Listen to me, Sarah. I'm in trouble. The loch. Something going on. Danger. My room. Check my room . . ." For a second, the line went dead. Sarah Jane was about to say something when she heard some sort of scuffling from the other end. Then, Susan spoke again, only this time it was hurried, distant. "Sarah, you've got to help! Help me, Sarah, hel . . ." The sentence

ended in a scream.

"Susan!" Sarah Jane cried. "Susan!" But there was no answer. Sarah Jane heard a dull thud on the line, and then the pips went. A second later, Sarah Jane stood stunned, the dull drone of a closed telephone line sounding in her ear. As she replaced the receiver, all she could say was, "Susan?"

"Bad news, Miss Smith?" said Archie.

"I don't know, Archie," Sarah Jane replied, not wishing to sound alarmist. "I don't know." But she was going to find out.

Sarah Jane switched her car headlights from dip to full beam, and peered out through her condensation-smeared windscreen at the country lane beyond. It was a useless exercise, the earlier mist having turned into a full fog. Sarah Jane frowned.

She had ascertained from Archie that there were only two public telephone boxes in the area around Gillicuddy, and as one was in the the closed and locked post office, Susan had to have called from the other, which was sited on the banks of Loch Crag. As Sarah Jane had been driving along the banks for the past twenty minutes, she knew that it had to be around somewhere. But she could see nothing.

"Parameters of normal spectrum visibility," said K9 from the passenger seat, "do not extend beyond ten point four feet, Mistress."

"I can see that, K9," said Sarah. "Can you switch to infra-red?"

"Affirmative."

"Do it then. Keep a look out for a telephone box."

"The probability of the Doctor having materialised the Tardis in this area at this time is approximately two billion . . ."

"*Not* the Tardis, K9," interrupted Sarah Jane, "just a normal, everyday call box."

"Apologies, Mistress. Confusion regarding present mission due to fact that I was awoken from rest phase and placed into automobile without sufficient explanation or reason."

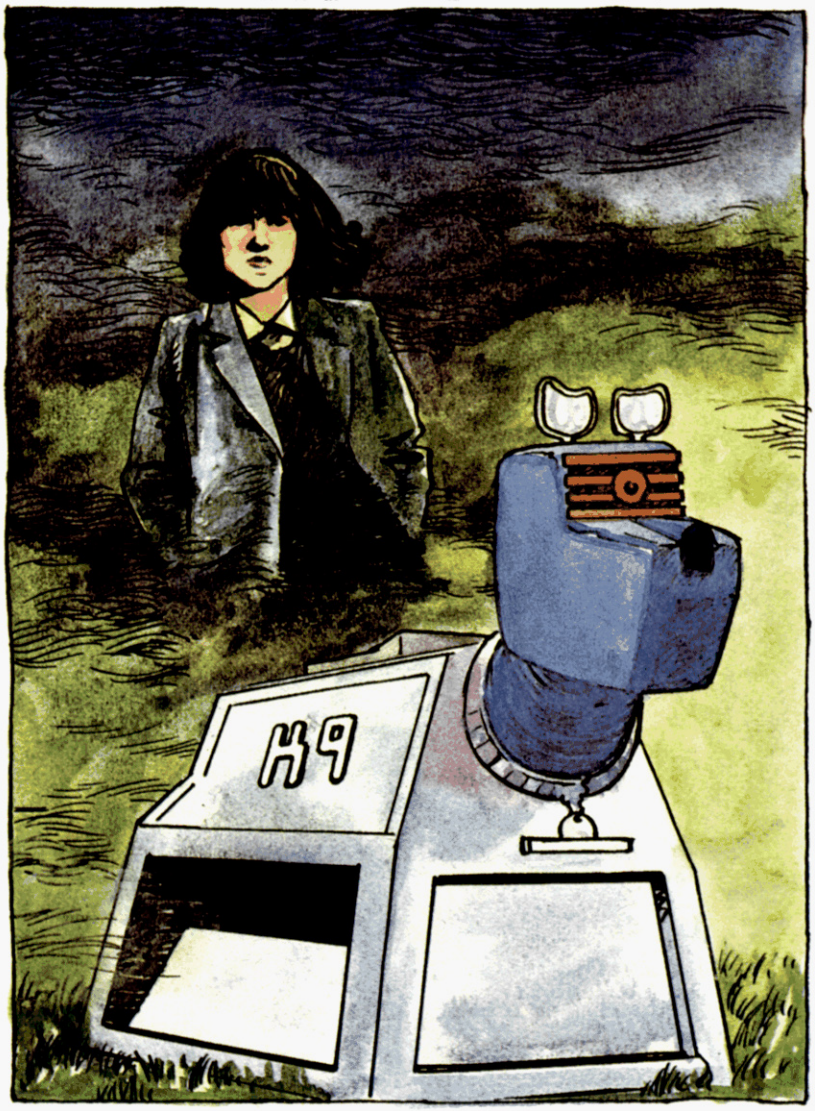
Sarah Jane had to smile. "You're forgiven, K9. I only wish I could explain. Can you see it?"

"Affirmative. Object immediately ahead has shape and mass conforming to what is required."

Sarah Jane braked. K9 was right. Directly ahead, the telephone box had emerged from the fog. Sarah Jane bit her lip when she saw that there was no sign of Susan. Inside, the telephone dangled on its lead. Whatever had happened, Susan had had no time to place it back in its cradle. Increasingly concerned, Sarah Jane opened the car door and, picking up K9, stepped out. Placing him on the ground, she said, "Continue infra-red scan, K9. Scan for body heat as well. We're looking for my friend."

K9 began to trundle off across the grass. Almost instantly, he had vanished into the fog. Only the sound of his, "Affirmative," told Sarah Jane where he was. She shivered. It was a very bad night to be out.

Backtracking on what K9 had reliably computed was Susan's path, Sarah Jane and K9 eventually came to what was quickly identified as Susan's car. It was abandoned, the driver door swinging open, on a slope just above the water line of the loch. Feeling the bonnet, Sarah Jane found that the engine was cold. There was nothing, no clue, to indicate what had happened to Susan. Nothing, except a camera, which K9 found apparently tossed into a clump of vegetation. It, too, was Susan's.



Sarah Jane placed it in her handbag. "Still no indications of life, K9?"

"Negative, Mistress."

Sarah Jane's heart fell. It was becoming increasingly obvious that there was no way that they were going to find Susan now. They would have to continue in the morning. Regretfully, Sarah Jane said, "Come on, K9, let's get back to the hotel. Tomorrow we'll call the police."

On the way back to the car, K9 suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, reporting that his infra-red scan had detected something on the surface of the loch. Straining, Sarah Jane stared out over the pitch-black, inhospitable waters. Whatever K9 had sensed, it was gone now, or at least she couldn't see it, and K9 was unable to supply an explanation of what it had been. Involuntarily, Sarah Jane shuddered. There was something mysterious and threatening about a Scottish loch at night, and Sarah Jane thought about all those old stories of the famous Loch Ness monster. Could there be a monster in this loch too? What could possibly have made Susan Hamilton vanish like she had?

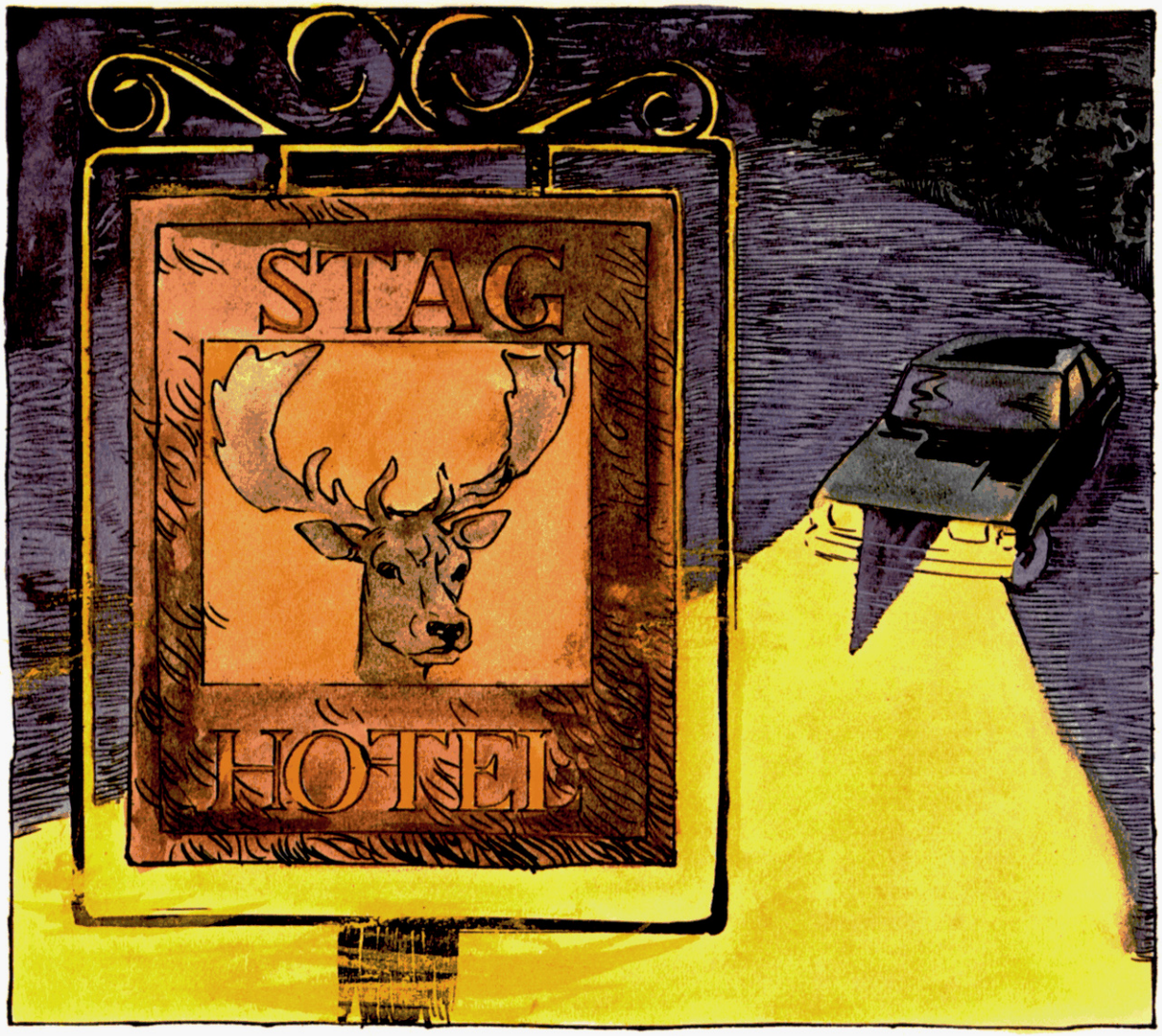
When she and K9 finally arrived back at the Stag Hotel, Sarah Jane was happy to see that all the lights were out and that everyone had gone to bed. She was happy because she didn't want everyone to see her breaking into Susan Hamilton's room. Susan had mentioned the room during her phone call, and Sarah Jane had a feeling that she might find something that would shed some light on her friend's disappearance.

"I wish," she said to K9 as the two of them moved quietly along the guest room corridor, "that the Doctor had left me a sonic screwdriver as well as you. I was never very good at picking locks."

"Your participation is not required, Mistress," K9 responded in as much of a whisper as he could manage. "The simple relocation of tumblers within lock mechanism is well within the bounds of my capabilities. Please indicate through which portal you desire access."

Sarah Jane smiled. "I should have known. Trust the Doctor to teach you something like that. Room number six."

K9 moved over to the door and regarded it for a second. Then, with a clicking of mechanisms, a



thin metal probe extended from his snout. It began to hum. A second later, Sarah Jane heard the lock click open. "After you, Mistress," said K9.

Susan Hamilton's room was a shambles. Sheets of note paper and newspaper cuttings were scattered everywhere. Furniture and bedclothes were strewn across the floor. Sarah Jane had no doubt that the room had been ransacked . . . but by whom? And why? She only hoped that whoever was responsible wasn't still there . . .

"Danger, Mistress!" warned K9. "Intruder!"

Sarah Jane had not time to react before a dark figure came hurtling towards her from a corner of the room. Sarah Jane tried to dodge, but the figure collided with her and sent the pair of them tumbling to the floor with a bang. For a few moments the two bodies wrestled with each other, but Sarah Jane eventually lost her grip and the stranger, obviously a man, judging by his strength, picked himself up and raced out into the corridor.

"Get him, K9!" Sarah Jane shouted.

K9 reversed and moved into the corridor, his laser barrel extending before him. He fired two shots, but both missed, the stranger having darted around a corner before K9 could line up a proper aim. He knew pursuit would be useless, and his logic circuits soon dictated that the more profitable course would be to return to room number six. De-activating his weaponry systems, K9 turned back to the door.

"Never mind, K9," said Sarah Jane, "we should be able to identify him from this." In her hand she held a small gold crest medallion which she had torn from the stranger's jacket in the struggle. It contained the image of a dragon. "It shouldn't be too hard to identify this. In the meantime, let's see what he wanted with Susan's things."

It didn't take long to determine what had been happening. In the corner of the room, the stranger had stuffed a pile of newspapers and notes into a bucket. On the floor beside it, a lighter had been left, obviously forgotten in the rush to escape. The stranger had intended to burn the things in the bucket. Sarah Jane began to pull out the newspapers, opening them up to look at the headlines:

POACHER DISAPPEARS ON LOCH CRAG. ABANDONED BOAT FOUND. TOURISTS IN SIGHTING OF "THING". GIGANTIC SMUGGLING RING SUSPECTED. NINE-YEAR-OLD BOY VANISHES WHILE OUT CAMPING. ILLEGAL CARGO SEIZED OFF SCOTTISH COAST. IS THERE A MONSTER IN LOCK CRAG?

Sarah Jane had seen enough.

This was obviously what Susan had wanted her to see. She smiled. Susan hadn't invited her up just for a holiday at all! Knowing that Sarah Jane could never resist a mystery, this had been in her mind all along! But even now that she had seen them, Sarah Jane was puzzled. What connection was there between disappearances, smuggling, and an unsubstantiated monster sighting by some innocent group of holidaymakers? Sarah Jane frowned. She didn't know, but she was sure of one thing; now that Susan too had disappeared, she and K9 were going to find out!

"The Laird, Miss Smith," said police constable McGregor, who had joined Sarah Jane for breakfast the following morning, and was now examining the medallion. "That creast belongs to the Laird, Stephen Crag."

"Crag?" questioned Sarah Jane, taking back the medallion.

Constable McGregor nodded. "He owns all of the land surrounding Loch Crag. Has a castle on top of the hill. Not a very friendly character, likes his privacy."

"I'll bet he does," said Sarah Jane, a suspicion already forming in her mind.

"Now, you're not connecting the Laird with all this smuggling, are you, Miss Smith?"

"Or the disappearances. Or both. Aren't you?" Sarah asked.

McGregor laughed. "Och, no! The Laird is a respectable man! Besides, there's no way he could smuggle anything into his castle. It'd be impossible overland, and what channels there are from the loch to the sea are mainly submerged. It'd be impossible to get a boat through!"

"Then you think I'm wrong?"

McGregor smiled. "Aye, I do. Forget about it, Miss Smith."

Sarah Jane stood up from the table. "Constable McGregor. A close friend of mine has disappeared under very strange circumstances. Until I find her, I have no intention of leaving Gillicuddy, or of dropping this matter. Now, will you help me or won't you?"

McGregor blushed, recognising that he had been backed into a corner. He had to admit to himself that he had had his own suspicions about Crag . . . but monsters on the loch? Smuggling? Strange disappearances? It was a lot to suspect of one man, almost too ridiculous for words. Finally, he relented. "Alright, Miss Smith," he said with a sigh, "I'll help as much as I can."

"Good," said Sarah Jane with a smile, "now this is what I want you to do . . ."

Sarah Jane and K9 stood on the banks of Loch Crag, a small rowboat bobbing about in the water beneath them. Although it was only six o'clock, it was already almost totally dark. Night comes quickly in the Scottish Highlands. It was getting very cold, too, and Sarah Jane buttoned up the coat she was wearing: Looking at her watch, she said, "Come on, K9, time to go."

"Large concentrations of low temperature H_2O disagree with internal circuitry, Mistress," objected K9.

Sarah Jane smiled, glad for that bit of K9's unintentional humour. She knew that what they were about to do could prove danger-

ous, and she did not feel very cheerful. But setting herself and K9 up as bait in a trap was the only plan she could think of to prove her suspicions about Crag, so, taking a deep breath, she reassured K9 and carried him into the row-boat with her. When they had both settled down, she took up the oars and pushed off from shore. "Scanners on, K9," she said. "If *anything* moves, tell me."

Nothing happened for half an hour. It was like another world out in the centre of the loch; black, silent and cursed with an atmosphere of terrible loneliness. Sarah Jane hummed to herself nervously, and poured herself a hot coffee from the flask she had brought along. Then, just as she was beginning to think she may have been wrong all along, K9 extended his laser barrel and uttered a warning. "Object approaching at speed, Mistress. Trajectory indicates it will intercept this vessel in eight point one seconds!"

Sarah Jane sat bolt upright and stared into the loch. But she couldn't see a thing! "What is it, K9? Where is it?"

"Four point six seconds. Extreme caution, Mistress!"

Sarah Jane felt the first twinges of panic. She had at least expected to *see* something when she had planned this! Sometimes she was just too curious for her own good! Sarah Jane stood up, and the boat started to rock. "K9, where is it!"

"Data indicates object is submerged. Two point four seconds to impact. Warning, Mistress! Warning!"

But it was already too late. In the last seconds, Sarah Jane saw the *thing*. Just beneath the surface of the loch, a dark shape loomed and, above, black fins sliced through the water, sending spray everywhere. Sarah Jane screamed. It was a monster! Then, a figure leapt from the water and grabbed Sarah Jane by the arms, and, struggling, she was pulled overboard! For a few seconds, the water thrashed madly, and then Sarah Jane was gone! Air bubbles broke on the surface.

"Mistress?" said K9. "Mistress?" Although he had been programmed to protect Sarah Jane at all times, K9 knew that there was nothing he could do. K9 fell silent, logically trying to formulate a plan. Calculating the eddies and currents in the loch, he knew that he would eventually be carried back to shore.

Constable McGregor slapped his hands together to drive away the cold, and continued his walk up the drive to Castle Crag. If Miss Smith was wrong, he knew that the Laird would not take kindly to being disturbed at this time of night, but if she was right, he knew he had to stay alert. McGregor reached the portcullis of the castle. Although two men stood behind it, it was closed.

"I wish to see the Laird," McGregor shouted.

"That's impossible, Constable. I'm sorry."

"This is official business. Obstructing a member of the Queen's constabulary in the course of his duty is a criminal offence."

"We have our orders . . ." one of the men started to say, but he never finished. A beam of red light suddenly hit him on the shoulder and he fell to the ground. Much to McGregor's shock, the other man started to pull a gun from his jacket, but he too never had a chance to finish what he had started. McGregor spun round to face the direction from which the beams had come. "They are stunned," said K9, "no other course of action was possible."

Constable McGregor gaped at K9. Now he had seen everything! A talking dog? A talking, *metal* dog? McGregor shook his head. "What are you?" he said, his accent deteriorating into thick Scots.

"I am K9. Mistress Sarah Jane will explain. Please proceed." K9 let off another laser bolt at the portcullis, then, with a call of, "Mistress," he moved in through the hole.

McGregor, suddenly wishing he had never become a policeman, followed.

"Three pounds and fifty pence, please, Miss Hamilton," said Archie MacGibbon.

Susan Hamilton handed over the money and, with difficulty, carried the round of drinks back to the table. "So, as I was saying," she said, "when K9 burst in through that door and stunned Crag and all his men, I couldn't believe it!"

McGregor laughed. "Aye, he's a canny dog, all right. But I still can't believe it all happened in the first place."

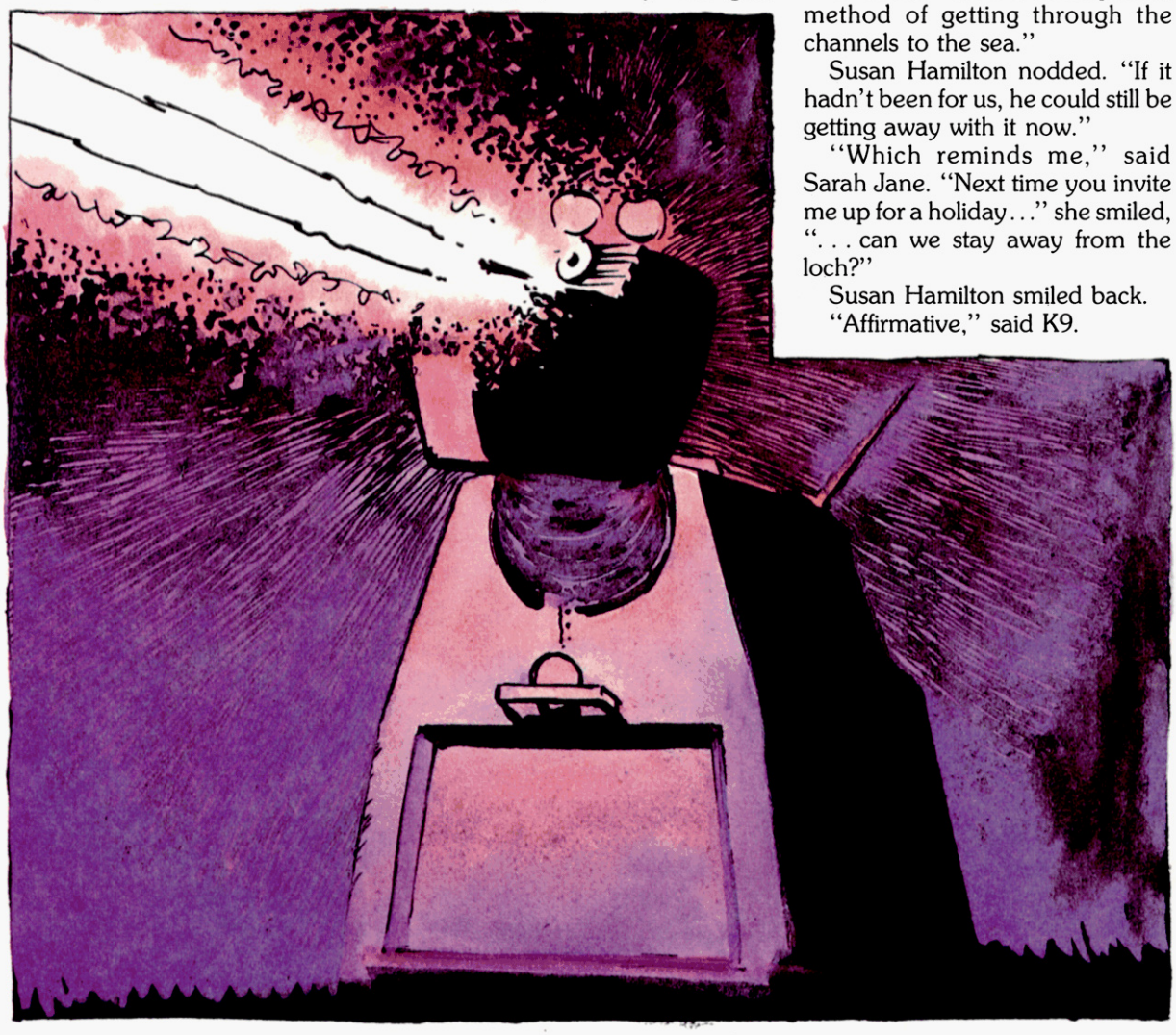
"It was a brilliant plan, though," said Sarah Jane. "By using a mini-submarine disguised as a monster, Crag could frighten anyone away from the loch, keeping the coast clear for his smuggling activities. And the submarine was the perfect method of getting through the channels to the sea."

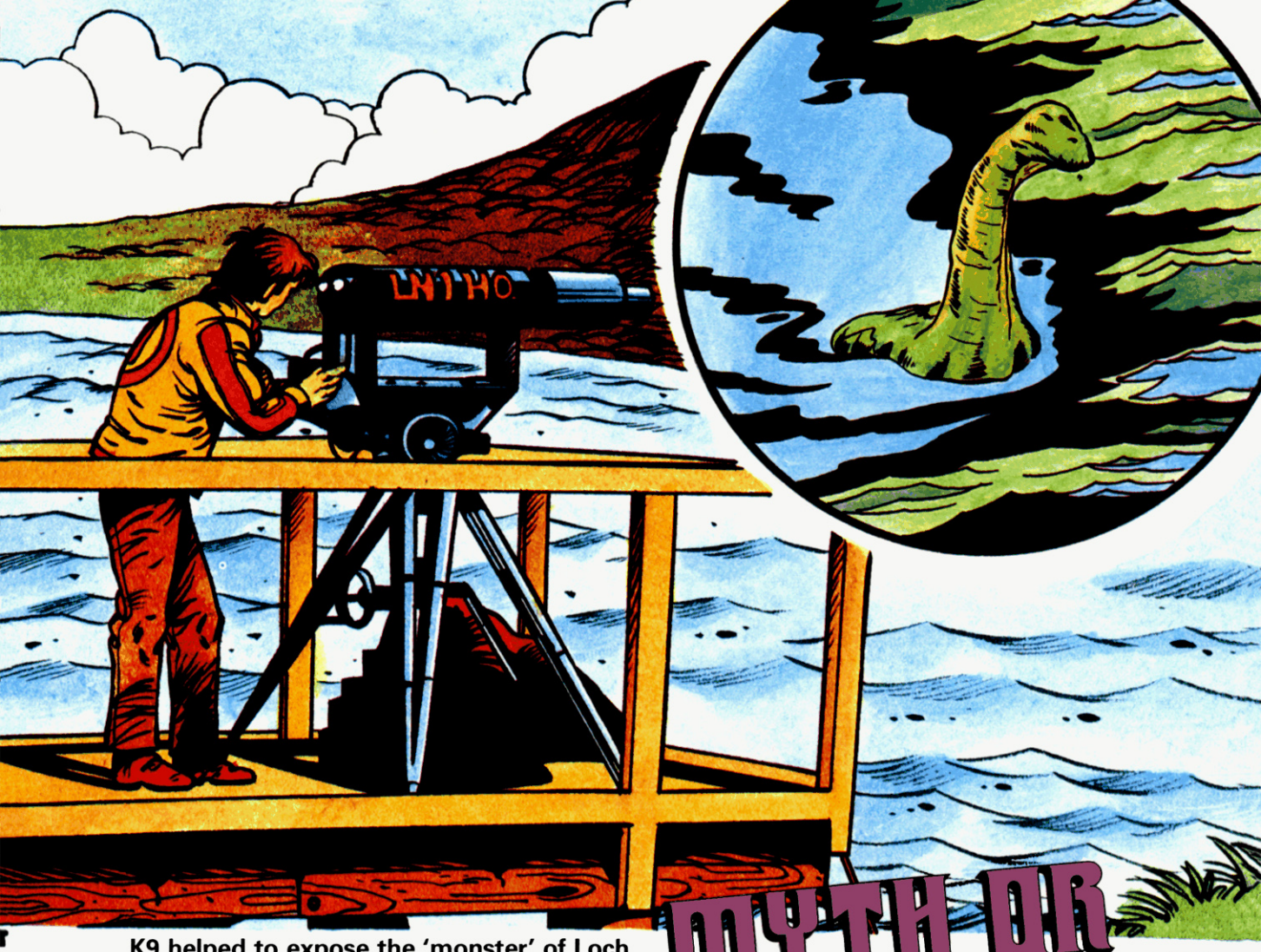
Susan Hamilton nodded. "If it hadn't been for us, he could still be getting away with it now."

"Which reminds me," said Sarah Jane. "Next time you invite me up for a holiday . . ." she smiled, ". . . can we stay away from the loch?"

Susan Hamilton smiled back.

"Affirmative," said K9.





MYTH OR MONSTER?

K9 helped to expose the 'monster' of Loch Crag, and it turned out not to be a monster at all. But what of Loch Ness, and the famous monster which many people believe still lives there?

The Loch Ness monster is regularly in the news, whenever a new sighting is made, or a new expedition sets out to discover the truth about the fascinating legend. So far, Nessie, as the monster is affectionately known, has eluded all attempts to prove or disprove her existence, and she remains as mysterious today as when she was first mentioned in history.

That was in the year 565, more than fourteen centuries ago.

It happened when St Columba was travelling to Inverness, where he hoped to bring Christianity to the Picts. As he passed the loch, a small boat drifted out from the shore, and one of his followers tried to retrieve it. He had hardly stepped into the water before 'a strange beast' rose out of the water beside him. St Columba faced the creature, and ordered it to leave the man alone and the monster disappeared again into the dark water.

The darkness of the water of Loch Ness, in fact, has been one of the greatest difficulties facing all expeditions which have searched for Nessie ever since. It is caused by the very dark peaty soil of the area, which cuts visibility down dramatically under the surface of the Loch.

Over the centuries, sightings have been made. But it has only been in comparatively recent years that the monster has attracted the attention of the world, with sightings being widely reported and commented upon.

One famous sighting was made in 1933, when a local hotel owner and his wife saw a gigantic creature with two humps or coils and a snake-like neck. And in November of that same year came another important landmark, when a local man walking home from church was able to take the first photograph of the creature. Experts confirmed that the film had not been tampered with, but unfortunately the picture was not very clear.

The 'object' it showed was some 40 feet long.

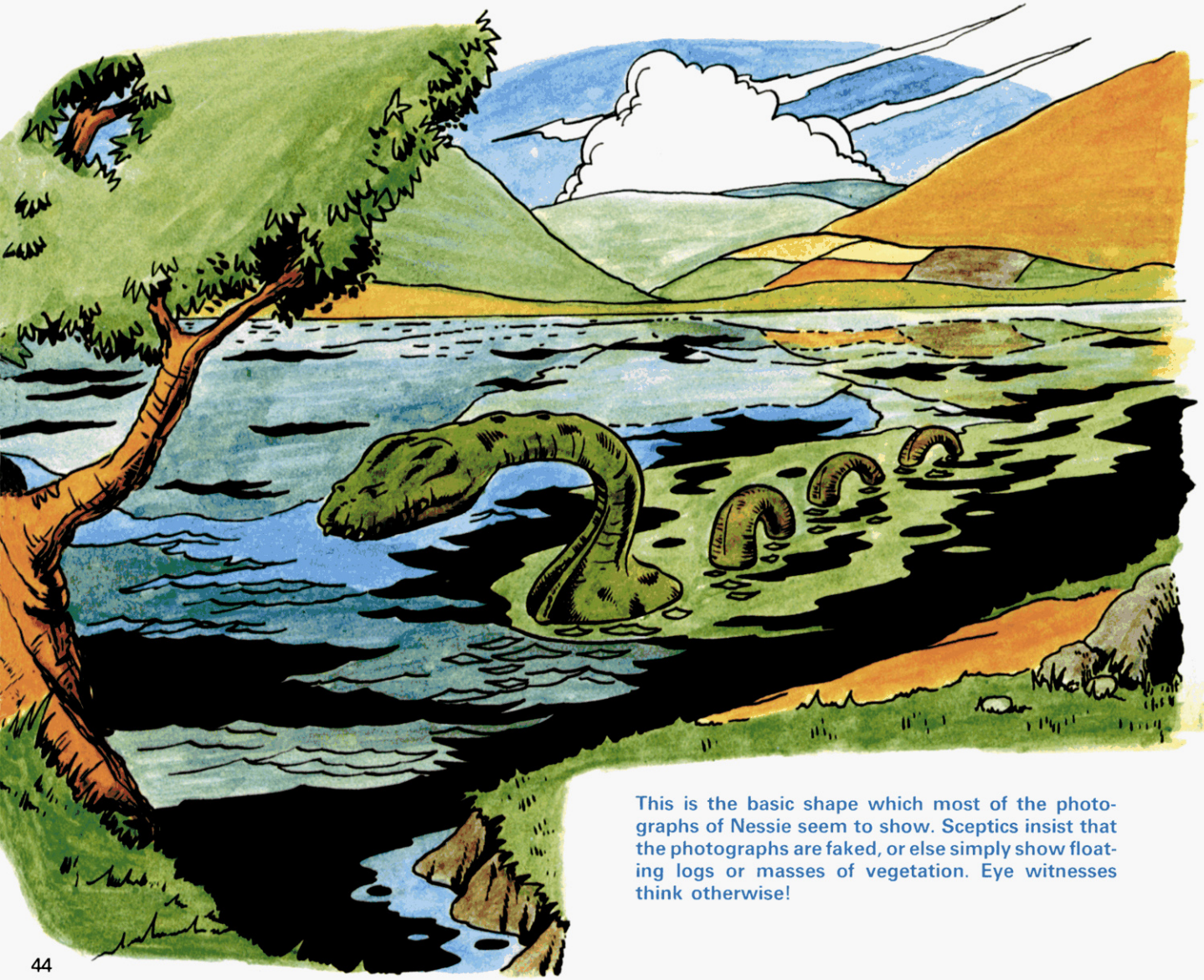
Since then other photographs have shown the now-famous humps of the monster, and its small, snail-like head. It seems to have a long, graceful neck, and a rather flat tail. Some photos show small flippers towards the front of the creature, and larger ones at the back. It seems to be grey in colour, though descriptions vary from silver grey to almost black.

For some reason, the Loch Ness monster is generally referred to in the feminine form, as 'she', but of course if it does exist, then there must logically be both male and female of the species, as one monster could surely not have lived through all those centuries. One theory is that it is a species of creature left over from the prehistoric era, when huge creatures roamed the earth, and that a small colony still exists in the loch, reproducing, and generally going about their lives, as they have done for thousands of years.

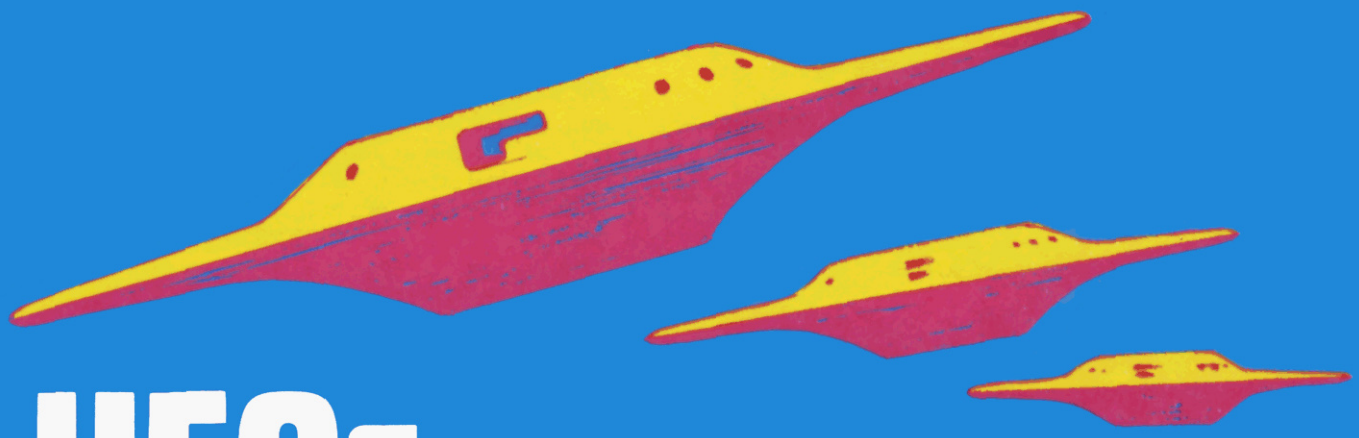
Naturalist Sir Peter Scott, who has made several studies of the monster, believes that it may be related to the plesiosaurs, which scientists believe disappeared from the earth some 7 million years ago. The waters of Loch Ness are deeper in parts than the North Sea, and the creatures could be living undisturbed in subterranean passages and caves.

Whatever the truth of the legend, it has certainly caught the attention of the world, and expeditions have arrived from many countries to search for the creature. Armed with submarines, powerful underwater lights, tape recordings of the calls of other sea creatures, and similar paraphernalia, the scientists and enthusiasts have proceeded to search. They have taken photos, and they have for the most part come away convinced in their own minds that the monster does exist.

But as for definite proof, well, Nessie isn't quite ready to introduce herself yet. If and when she does decide to make herself known to her public, let's hope she's in a friendly mood!



This is the basic shape which most of the photographs of Nessie seem to show. Sceptics insist that the photographs are faked, or else simply show floating logs or masses of vegetation. Eye witnesses think otherwise!



UFOs-
IS THIS THE ANSWER?

A constant stream of UFO sightings continues to pour into the offices of investigative societies, week in and week out, and many people are convinced that we are being closely observed by the inhabitants of another planet. On the other hand, there is also a constant stream of more down-to-earth explanations for all those lights and sights in the skies.

One of the latest explanations comes from scientists in Russia, following a spate of sightings by very reliable observers.

One of the first incidents came in October 1977, when three new Soviet military aircraft were being tested near the city of Ryazan. Suddenly the crews noticed a luminous, pulsating object. It was blindingly white, and it had the appearance of a huge ball of cotton wool.

That one sighting was mysterious enough, but it was followed by several more. In another case the crew of an Aeroflot airliner saw what they took to be the rising moon in the sky, and switched off the cabin lights so that the passengers would get a good view. They all did get a good view, but not of the rising moon. Instead, it was a mysterious brilliant white disc, which emitted light as if from a searchlight.

On yet another occasion, another of these strange bright lights actually collided with an Aeroflot aircraft, and caused considerable damage, though no one was hurt.

All this might sound disturbing; but Soviet scientists are not at all convinced that their pilots have seen ships from outer space. They have another explanation: chemiluminescence.

Chemiluminescence can probably best be described as cold radiation. In the atmosphere there are always millions of microscopic, chemically-active particles, and it is when these particles condense that they create chemiluminescence. Their light becomes intense, and it may even be, at times, twenty times brighter than that of the sun.

The rare phenomenon known as ball lightning is a type of chemiluminescence, and ball lightning itself has been the explanation for many UFO sightings in the past.

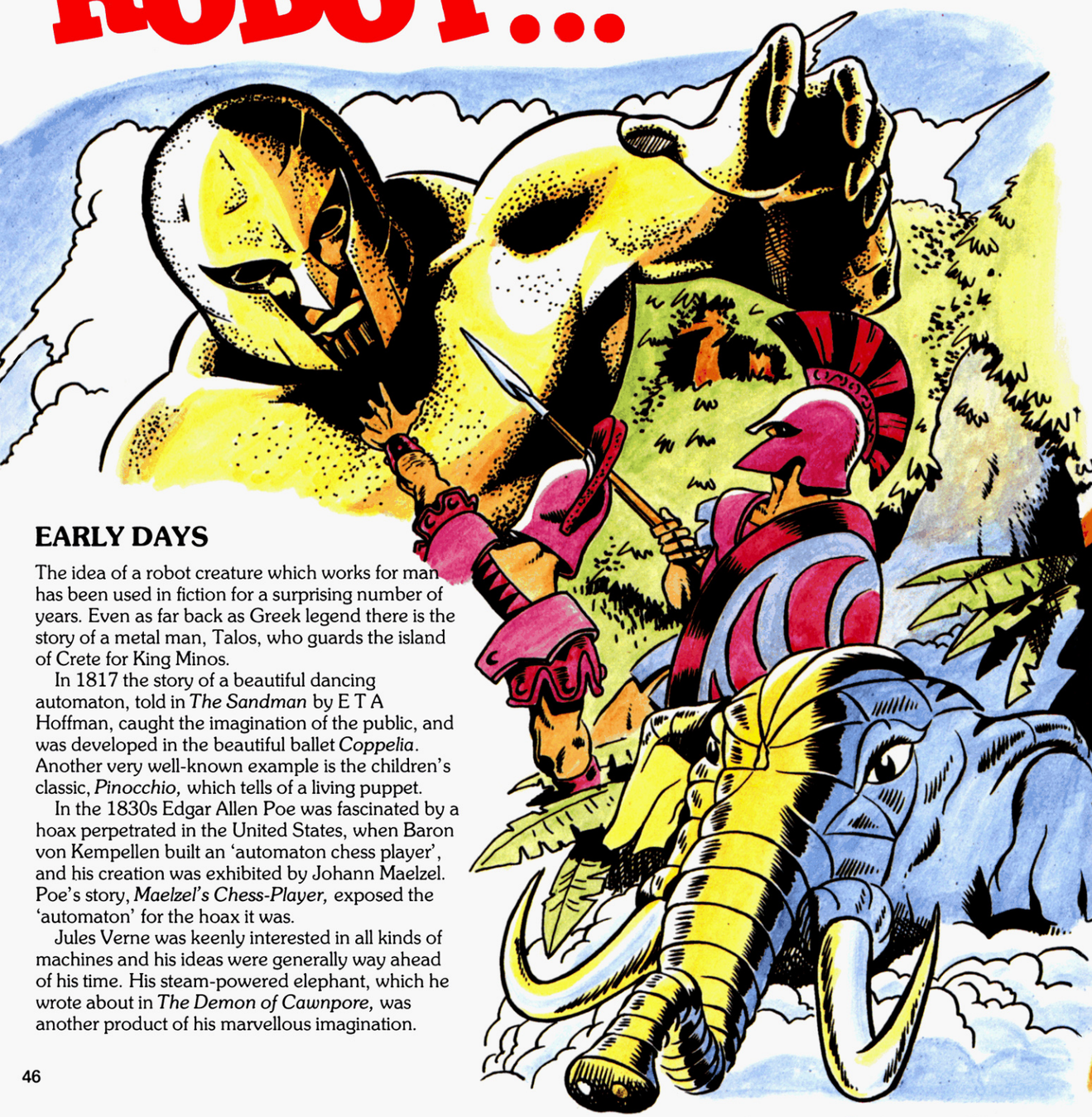
So there you are... a very plausible and likely-sounding explanation for some of those mysterious lights in the sky. Scientists all over the world are probably nodding their heads in agreement.

As for us lesser mortals... well, we'd still rather believe in little green men! Wouldn't we?

Once upon a time, there was a ROBOT...

The word 'robot' has come to mean almost any sort of device that can be programmed to help man, from the purely functional machines used in construction processes in modern industry, to the highly fanciful creations of science fiction, of which the Star Wars robots R2D2 and C3P0 are the best-known examples.

The use of robots in industry is a fascinating subject, but just for now let's take a look at K9's colleagues . . . the robots of fiction.



EARLY DAYS

The idea of a robot creature which works for man has been used in fiction for a surprising number of years. Even as far back as Greek legend there is the story of a metal man, Talos, who guards the island of Crete for King Minos.

In 1817 the story of a beautiful dancing automaton, told in *The Sandman* by E T A Hoffman, caught the imagination of the public, and was developed in the beautiful ballet *Coppelia*. Another very well-known example is the children's classic, *Pinocchio,* which tells of a living puppet.

In the 1830s Edgar Allen Poe was fascinated by a hoax perpetrated in the United States, when Baron von Kempellen built an 'automaton chess player', and his creation was exhibited by Johann Maelzel. Poe's story, *Maelzel's Chess-Player,* exposed the 'automaton' for the hoax it was.

Jules Verne was keenly interested in all kinds of machines and his ideas were generally way ahead of his time. His steam-powered elephant, which he wrote about in *The Demon of Cawnpore,* was another product of his marvellous imagination.

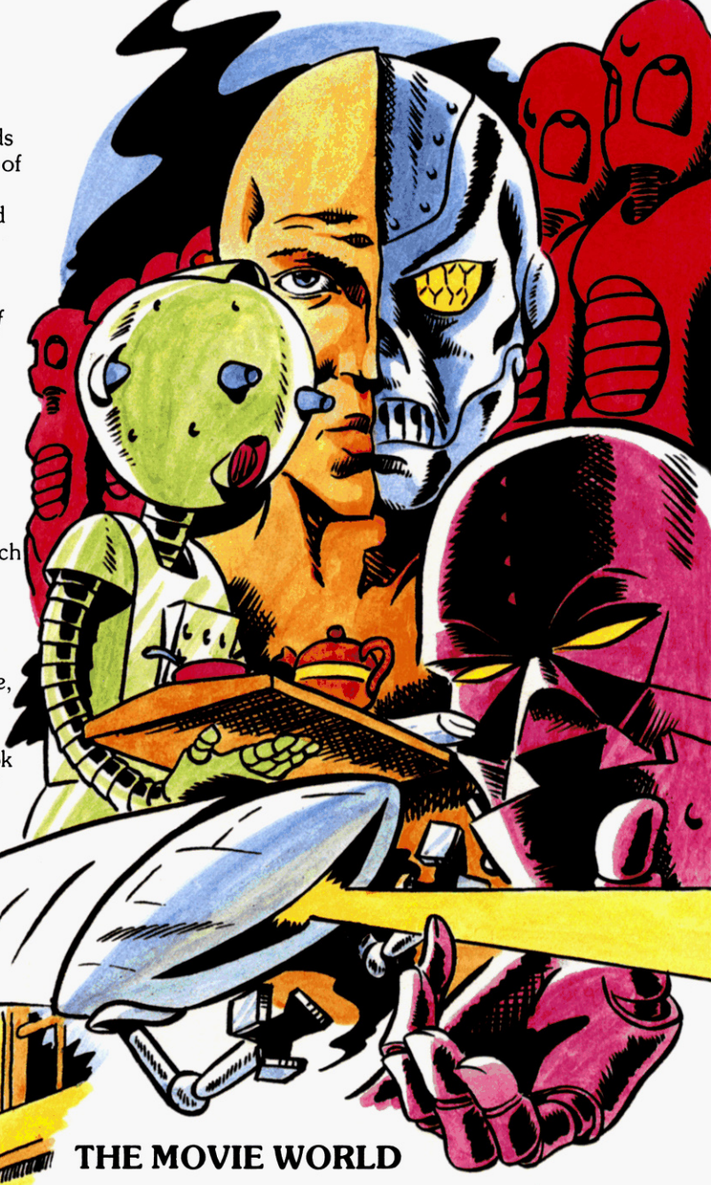
THE 20th CENTURY

In the 20th century the idea of robots and androids began to be widely discussed, both in fiction and, of course, in real life technology.

An early idea from fiction were the atom-powered robots built by an electronic brain in Edmond Hamilton's *The Metal Giants.* That story was written in 1926, and in 1928 and 29 came stories from David H Keller, including one, *The Threat of the Robot,* in which robots were seen working in various professions, including playing American football.

To go back a couple of years, the word 'robot' itself came from the Czech play *R.U.R.,* by Karel Capek. It was derived from the words 'robota', meaning compulsory labour, and 'robotnik', meaning workman. The robots in the play are indistinguishable from humans, and nowadays such creations are termed 'androids', from the Greek word for 'man-like'.

From the 1950s onwards, stories about robots really took off, and they were popping up everywhere, in fiction, on television and, of course, in science fiction films. Some of the stories contained a hint of menace, when the machines turned against their creators, and other stories took a humorous form, such as a 1966 story, *Revolt of the Potato Picker* by Herb Lehrmann, where a machine built for drudgery in the fields actually longs for a career as a dancer.

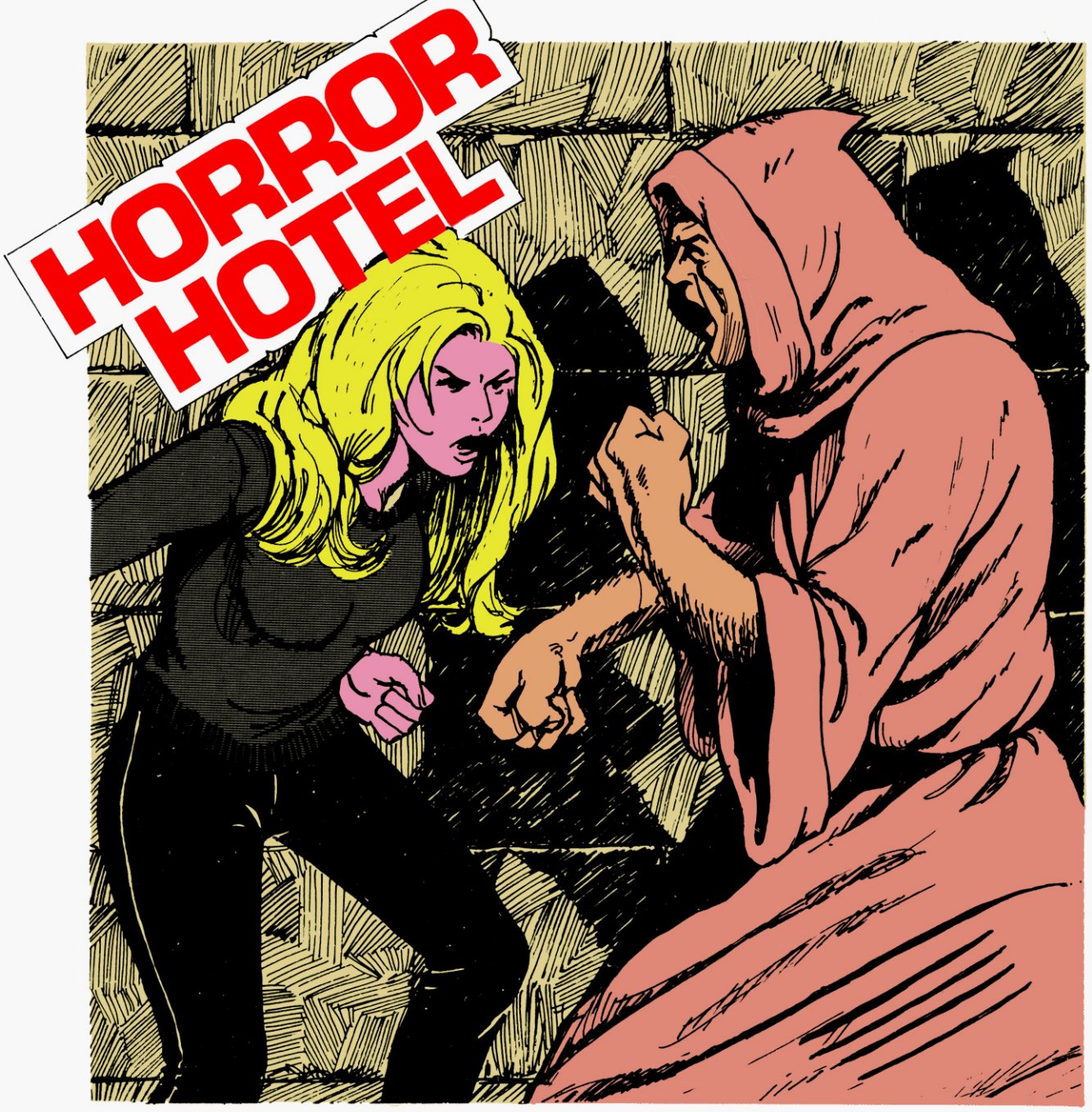


THE MOVIE WORLD

The fantastic success of science fiction films in the 1970s and 80s, with their almost unbelievably imaginative special effects, has assured the fictional robot its place in the hearts of the general public. The lovable R2D2 and C3P0 of the hugely-successful *Star Wars* are the best examples, but there was also the sinister *Max* in Walt Disney's *Black Hole,* and the helpful android *Rab* in *Logan's Run,* to name but four of the most popular movie creations.

And on TV, K9 just has to be the most entertaining.

Looks like the future of the robot is a rosy one, and if past history is anything to go by, the real life world of the robot will probably be even more fantastic than anything which has been created in fiction.



The small rock chamber hidden far below the Crag Cliff Hotel was filled with the sound of chanting. A robed and hooded figure moved slowly around a stone table, sprinkling a fine red powder over its harsh grey surface. "Di-mon. Di-mon. Di-mon," he repeated. At first, the chant was soft, but as the powder obscured the stone it grew louder. "Di-mon! Di-mon! Di-mon!" Finally, the figure exhausted the red powder. The chanting stopped. "The table of transformation is prepared," the figure said.

Besides the chanter, there were four men and a young woman in the chamber. All except the young woman were dressed in similar robes and hoods. One of the men stepped towards the stone table. "Then we await the eve," he said.

Suddenly, the young woman dashed forward and grabbed the man who had spoken by the shoulders, spinning him to face her. "Father," she cried. "you must stop this madness!" The man stared at the young woman. "Soon, my child," he bellowed, "the eve will be here. You will become of the body. You will understand. You will follow." He sighed, and when he spoke again his voice was surprisingly gentle. "Then . . . then it will be madness no longer."

The young woman pulled away, her eyes full of fear. "Don't you understand?" she cried, her voice wavering. "I don't want to belong! I want no part of this evil!"

The man stiffened. "Evil!" he shouted, his voice full of anger now. "You dare to call us evil!" He raised his hand as if to hit the young woman.

"No!" cried one of the other figures. "It is the law. She who is of the blood must remain unharmed!" He moved over and forced the man's hand down. "Leave her to me," he said. "There are more . . . subtle methods."

The man let his body relax. "Very well," he agreed. "Do what must be done."

The other figure nodded and motioned to the other men in the chamber. Two of them moved over and grabbed the young woman by the arms. She struggled as they dragged her towards a rough stairway cut into the side of the chamber. As she was pulled up the steps and out of view, her voice echoed back: "Father, please! Please!"

The man waited a few seconds and then walked over to the stairway himself. "Seal the chamber," he said to the remaining men. "Then return to the hotel." He started to climb the stone steps.

When he emerged from the stairway into a comfortably furnished study high above, the man had removed his robes and was dressed in normal attire. He was in his mid-fifties and, despite his previous manner and appearance, had a friendly, weather-worn face. Only the cold glint of his eyes betrayed the dark secrets that he was a party to.

There was a knock on the study door. The man walked over to it and pulled it open. One of the robed and hooded figures stared in at him. "We have a problem," he said.

"What?" barked the man, annoyed at being disturbed in his study.

"Visitors. A woman and what looks like a dog. They are coming up the drive. What do we do?"

The man frowned. Officially the hotel was closed, so what did they want? Whatever it was, he had to get rid of them. He could not afford to have guests staying in the hotel so near to the eve. "Leave them to me," he said, and walked out into the hotel reception. Through a window, he could see the visitors approaching the main door. He spun back towards the other man. "And get rid of that robe, you fool!" he hissed.

Sarah Jane and K9 entered through the main door. Sarah Jane's coat was covered in specks of snow, and she shivered with the effects of the cold night air. She closed the door behind her. "Good evening," she said. "My name's Sarah Jane Smith. Do you have a room I could book for the night?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Smith," said the man. "We're closed for the winter."

"Yes, I know," said Sarah Jane. "I saw the sign at the bottom of the drive. But, you see, my car's broken down about a mile down the road and there's no garage that will send someone out at this time of night." She smiled. "I'm afraid I'm stranded."

"I see," said the man. "But unfortunately . . ."

"I only want a room for one night," interrupted Sarah Jane, "and I've already eaten. Surely it wouldn't be too much trouble for you to let out one room?"

The man hesitated. He had not anticipated this sort of problem. "Miss Smith," he began, trying desperately to think of a believable reason to refuse a room, "I . . ." He was cut off by the sound of a scream from upstairs.

"What was that?" shouted a shocked Sarah Jane.

The man paled. That had torn it. His daughter's scream would have made the Smith woman suspicious. If he turned her away now, with some lame excuse, she would more than probably report what she had heard to the police. His mind raced. Providing the woman left early in the morning he should still have enough time to make all the final preparations for the eve. There was no reason for the Smith woman to see anything at all. He had to risk it! "The scream?" he said. "My daughter. She has . . . nightmares. Very well, Miss Smith," he added, before Sarah Jane had time to think about what he had said, "I'll give you a room for tonight."

Sarah Jane smiled. "Thank you, Mister . . .?"

"Lord. James Lord. If you'd care to sign the register?"

Sarah Jane nodded and signed her name. Lord guided her and K9 to the lift and up to her room. Wishing her a goodnight, Lord walked slowly back down to reception. Lord sensed that despite Sarah Jane's surface acceptance of his explanation for the scream, she was still suspicious. He decided that he would have to keep a careful eye on her. Her and that strange metal dog. Lord only hoped that the Smith woman was not one of those people who had a tendency to pry.

Sarah Jane leapt up in bed, her ears prickling at the sound which had roused her from sleep. She looked at her watch. It was three in the morning. Someone had smashed a window at three in the morning! Quickly, Sarah Jane rolled out of bed and strode over to the door of her room. The sound of running footsteps came from outside in the corridor. Sarah Jane started to unlock the door.

"Negative, Mistress," said K9. "The window."

Sarah Jane turned. From the position where she had placed him earlier, K9 could see out of the window, and it was obvious that he had detected something going on below, in the grounds of the hotel. Sarah Jane moved over and stared out.

Far below, a young woman jumped off the end of a drainpipe and started to run across the lawn. From the way her head darted about, it was obvious that she was trying to run away from something, or someone. Her pursuers appeared a second later, pouring out of the hotel's main entrance like men possessed. Sarah Jane noted with distaste that they wore what looked like satanists' robes. The girl screamed. She was soon surrounded. Fighting and struggling, the young woman was dragged back into the hotel.

"I don't like this, K9," said Sarah Jane. "Something very strange is going on here."

"Affirmative, Mistress," responded K9. "Available data corroborates suspicion. Course of action?"

"I think," said Sarah Jane, turn-

ing from the window, "that we should have a quiet word with that young woman. We'll wait till things quieten down again then search out her room."

Soon after another burst of footsteps and voices from out in the corridor, things did quieten down, and Sarah Jane and K9 slipped out of their room and sneaked along the corridor. They eventually reached a room from which Sarah Jane could hear the sound of sobbing.

Sarah Jane listened for a second, determining whether anyone else beside the young woman was in the room, and when she knew there wasn't, tried the door. It was locked. Sarah Jane started to pick the lock. Eventually, the door sprang open. Sarah Jane and K9 darted in.

"Who are you?" yelled the young woman, leaping from her bed in surprise. "How did you get here?!"

Sarah Jane shushed the young woman and smiled. "We're friends. We saw you before, on the lawn. It looked like you were in trouble. Are you?"

The young woman nodded. "But you'd never believe me if I told you what was going on!"

"Try me," said Sarah Jane. "I want to help."

"Have you ever heard of covens?" said the young woman. "Black magic?"

Despite herself, Sarah Jane grinned. What a ridiculous question to ask her and K9, of all people! "Let's just say," she said, "that K9 and I have had a little experience of it. Tell us about it."

"It goes back many years," said the young woman, "many, many years . . ."

Gradually, the story unfolded. The young woman's name was Melissa Lord. She was the daughter of James Lord. And James Lord was the High Priest of a satanic coven! This was a position which had always been held by a member of the Lord family. Now, James Lord was getting old, and the time had come for his heir to take over. His heir was Melissa Lord. Only Melissa did not want the position. Lord and his fellow satanists were forcing her, by mental and physical means, to become part of an evil which she abhorred!

"We have to get you out of here," said Sarah Jane.

Melissa shook her head. "It's no good. I was trying to get away earlier. But there are guards everywhere!"

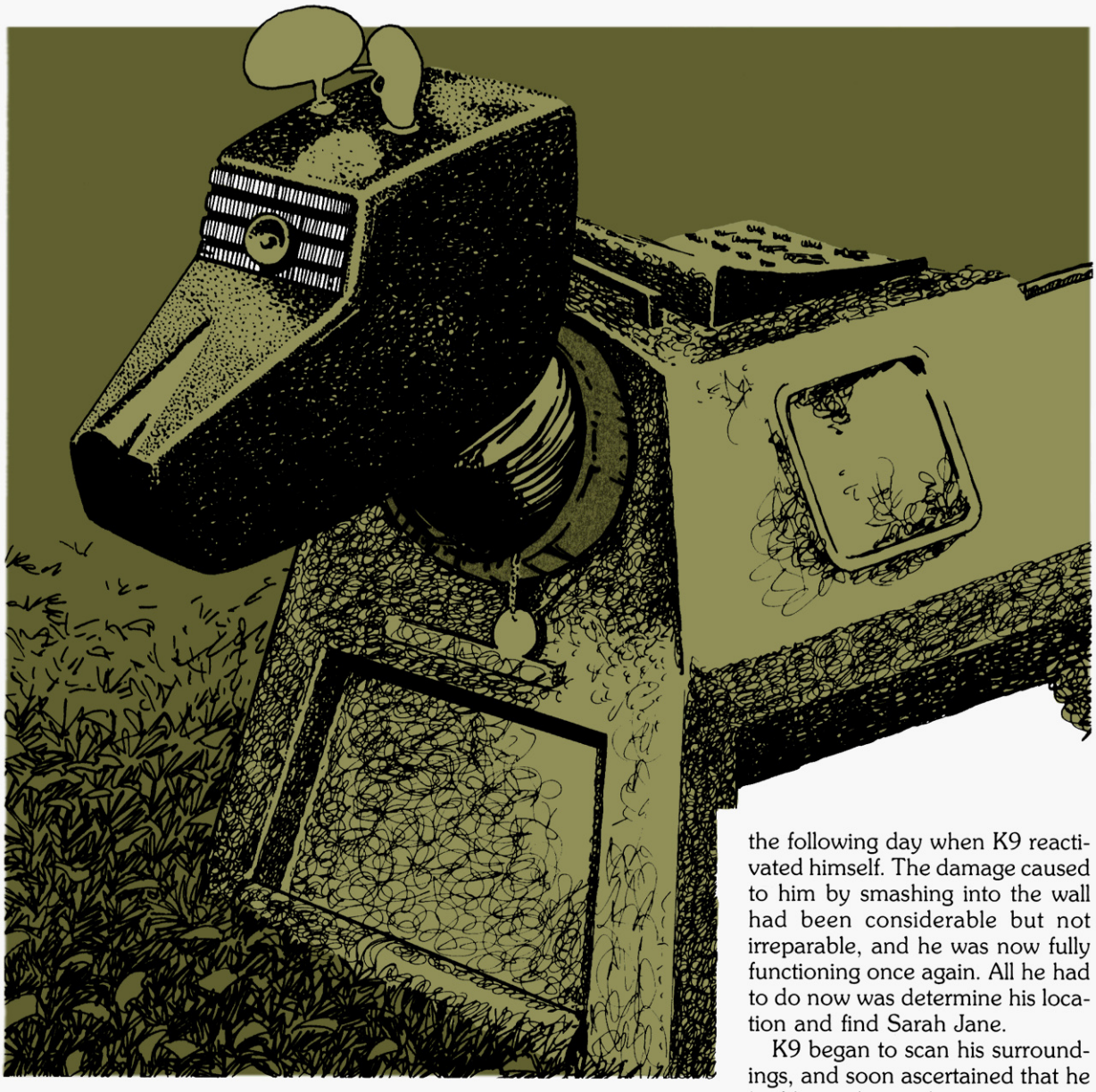
"Well, now you have K9 and I to help you. We'll get you out, don't worry."

Melissa shook her head again, she was close to tears now. "My father is too clever. He'll find me. Bring me back."

Sarah Jane took a deep breath and shook Melissa by the shoulders. It was obvious that she had already partially succumbed to her father's 'persuasion tactics'. "Listen to me, Melissa," urged Sarah Jane. "You *do not* have to go through with the ceremony! You *do not!*"

"Oh, but she does, Miss Smith," said a voice from the doorway. "She does."

Sarah Jane whirled around. James Lord and two robed and hooded figures stood, grinning, in the doorway. James Lord stepped



into the room. "Your prying has just guaranteed that," he said.

Sarah Jane leapt towards the doorway with a cry of "Melissa! K9! Come on!", but Lord and his henchman were too quick for her. Sarah Jane was grabbed by the arm and held tightly. She gasped in pain. K9 started to move over, extending his blaster, but, once again, Lord and his henchman were too quick. K9 managed to fire one stray stun beam before a blanket had been grabbed from the bed and flung over him, temporarily throwing his sensors off line. Helpless, K9 was picked up from the floor and thrown into the corridor, where he crashed against the opposite wall! Sarah Jane struggled to go out to him, but she could not break her captor's grip. She slumped in his arms, defeated!

"Yes," said Lord. "Thanks to you, Miss Smith, Melissa dare not refuse to go ahead with her initiation ceremony. Because, simply, if she does I will kill *you!*" Lord turned to his henchman. "Take Miss Smith to the chamber," he said. "Lock her up." Almost as an afterthought, he pointed out at K9. "And get rid of that *thing*. Dump it!"

According to his internal chronometer, it was seven p.m. of the following day when K9 reactivated himself. The damage caused to him by smashing into the wall had been considerable but not irreparable, and he was now fully functioning once again. All he had to do now was determine his location and find Sarah Jane.

K9 began to scan his surroundings, and soon ascertained that he had been dumped, presumably to rot, in a muddy, foliage-obscured ditch at the perimeter of the hotel grounds. He began to work his way out of it, finally emerging on the neatly mown lawn at its top.

"Mistress," said K9, and he started off across the grass towards the distant hotel.

In the chamber below the hotel, the ceremony of the eve had already commenced. From her place of captivity, a barred niche in the rock wall, Sarah Jane could see everything that was happening, and she watched with mounting anger as the ritual surrounding Melissa's 'initiation' began to unfold.

The chamber had filled with robed and hooded men and women. Each of them, apart from those who had other specific functions, carried a flaming torch. The smoke from them, coupled with that which came from the various sticks of burning incense scattered around, choked the atmosphere in the chamber. Sarah Jane could already feel the smoke on her lungs, and her eyes had begun to smart. Suddenly, Melissa appeared from the rock stairway, escorted by two members of the coven.

The chanting began: "Di-mon! Di-mon! Di-mon!"

Melissa was led over to the stone table and laid upon it. She offered no resistance and lay back on the fine red powder, closing her eyes in mute surrender to the evil people who surrounded her. James Lord, identifiable by the High Priest's mask he wore over his robe, walked up to the table and stood at Melissa's side. Suddenly, he raised his arms. The chanting stopped.

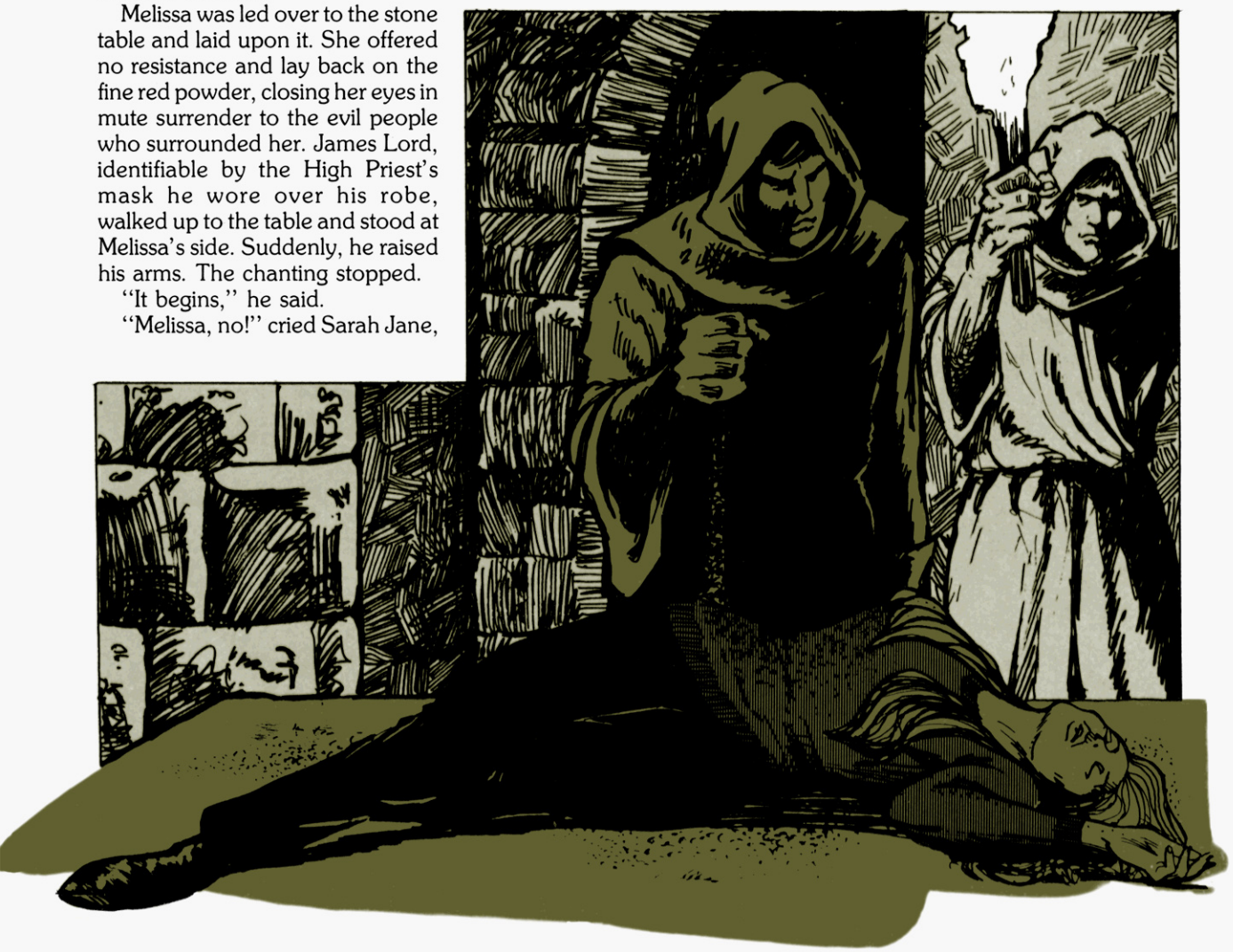
"It begins," he said.

"Melissa, no!" cried Sarah Jane, but she knew it would do no good. Melissa was submitting to the initiation to save Sarah Jane, and Sarah Jane knew enough about the black rites to know that once the initiation was complete, Melissa would have been brainwashed into following the wishes of the coven; and worse still, Sarah Jane knew full well that despite what Lord had said he had no intention of keeping her alive. Lord intended to kill Sarah Jane anyway!

Lord started to scoop up the red powder in his hands and sprinkle it over Melissa, and he began to chant the ritual words of the initiation ceremony. Beneath his outstretched hands, Melissa began to moan. Soon she was repeating Lord's words. She had started to become one of them!

Suddenly, the relative silence of the chamber was broken by an echoing blast. Sarah Jane looked over at the stairway. There, tipping himself slowly down the last few steps, blaster extended, was K9!

The activity in the chamber dissolved into chaos. Two members of the coven started to dash towards K9, their torches raised as clubs, but K9 cut them down with a stun beam. Others followed in their



tracks. Then others. The chamber lit up with stun beams and bodies started to fall everywhere. The spell of the ceremony broken, Melissa sat up on the stone table.

James Lord, horrified, tried to push her down again. Melissa began to struggle.

"K9!" shouted Sarah Jane through the bars of her cell, "get me out of here!"

With a warning of "Stand back, Mistress," K9 repositioned himself and fired his blaster. The bolt of energy blew the lock off Sarah Jane's cell. Sarah Jane leapt out and headed straight for Lord, leaving K9 to deal with the few remaining coven members who had not already succumbed to his stun beam.

Sarah Jane, seething with anger, ploughed into Lord and pulled him off Melissa. Lord was big, easily capable of defeating most men in a fight, but Sarah Jane's training in the martial arts held her in good stead, and soon she held Lord in an unbreakable grip. Ending the struggle, Sarah Jane karate-chopped Lord a stunning blow and he fell, out cold, to the ground.

Melissa sat up, smiling and relieved. "Thank you," she said.

Sarah Jane smiled back. "Don't thank me," she said, turning to face K9. "Thank him."

K9 was half-buried under a pile of unconscious or moaning bodies. There was not a scratch on him. Despite the fact that she knew it was a ludicrous thing to think, Sarah Jane was convinced that on K9's metal face there was an expression of smug satisfaction.

"Thank you, K9," said Melissa.

THE CURSE OF KANBO-ALA

"The train on platform six is for all stations to London," said a voice from the station loudspeaker. "All stations to London."

"That's us," said Sarah Jane. "We'd better get aboard." Bending down, she picked up her hand luggage and walked towards the train. K9 and Aunt Lavinia followed. As she climbed aboard Sarah Jane looked back at Brendan, who was still hovering on the platform. "Come on, Brendan," she said.

Brendan looked over. "It's going to be a long journey," he said. "I think I'll buy a magazine." He moved off towards the small newsagent's booth.

"Do you know how to find your compartment?" Sarah Jane shouted after him.

Brendan pulled out his ticket, looked at the number on it, and nodded. "Then we'll carry on," said Sarah Jane. "See you later."

Brendan picked out a couple of magazines from the selection on sale, a computer digest and a science fiction film periodical, paid for them, and started to move back towards the waiting train. With his head already buried in the magazine's contents, Brendan did not notice as another passenger wandered into his path. He bumped into him. Brendan looked up. "Sorry," he said.

"It was my fault," said the passenger, an Indian gentleman, "please accept my apologies."

Brendan smiled and nodded. Already forgetting the incident, he walked on.

After Brendan had gone, the Indian turned to face another man, again an Indian. "Did you get it?" the other man said.

The Indian smiled and opened his hand. He had Brendan's wallet! The Indian opened it and examined its contents, particularly the ticket which Brendan had produced earlier. "Compartment number nine," he said. "The women with him will probably be nearby."

"Then you know what must be done?" asked the other man.

The Indian nodded. "The idol will be ours again," he said. "The defilers will die!"

The train was just pulling out as Brendan reached his sleeper compartment. The bright lights of the platform disappeared as the train moved out into the night between stations. Brendan entered the compartment, threw his magazines on the bed, took off his coat and then went out again. The door to the adjoining compartment was open. Inside, Sarah Jane and Aunt Lavinia were deep in conversation. K9 seemed engrossed in staring out of the window. Brendan walked in.

"I still can't believe that he's dead," said Sarah Jane.

"Your uncle had a good life, my dear," replied Aunt Lavinia. "He would have wanted it to end like it did."

Sarah Jane shivered. "Trapped in a tomb? In the middle of a jungle? Alone?"

Aunt Lavinia smiled. "Africana Smith lived for adventure. All his life he was involved in exploring lost tombs and cities, locating legendary tribes, unearthing priceless archaeological treasures. It was a fitting end."

"Even so . . ." began Sarah Jane.

"Even so, nothing," interrupted Aunt Lavinia. "The best thing that we can do now is to ensure that he is remembered. By taking the treasures that he bequeathed us up to London, we can do just that. When they go on exhibition, they will send the archaeological societies into fits of ecstacy!"

Sarah Jane smiled. "I suppose so," she said. "Do you think the treasures will be safe in the cargo carriage?"

"Safe as houses, my dear," said Aunt Lavinia. "Stop worrying and enjoy the journey. We'll be in London by the morning."

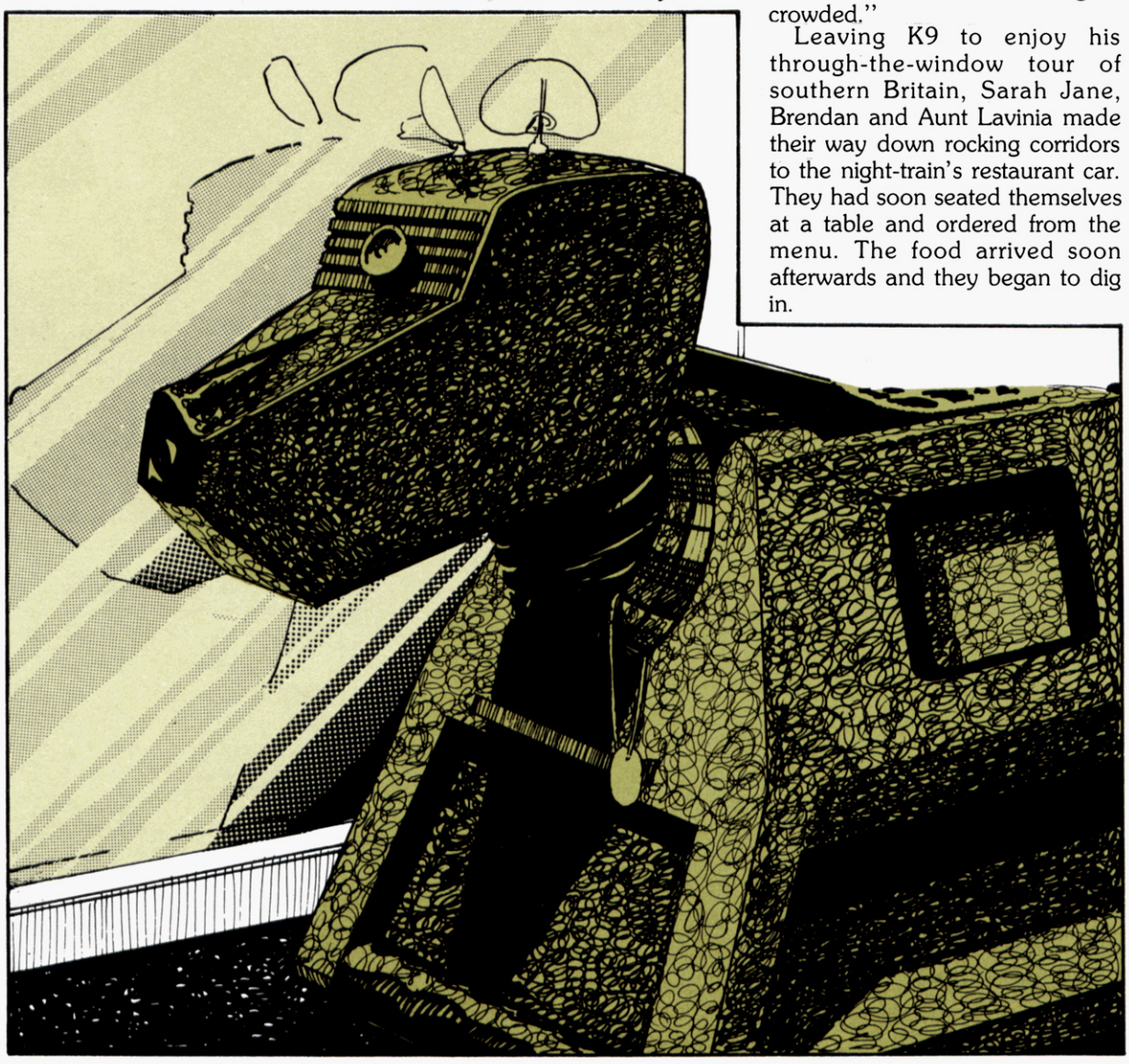
"Speaking of enjoying the journey," Brendan piped up. "I'm not going to unless I get something to eat. The restaurant car should be open by now."

Sarah Jane and Aunt Lavinia looked up. "Hint taken," said Aunt Lavinia. "I'm a little hungry myself. Sarah?"

"I'm not, but I'll join you," Sarah Jane said.

"We'd better go now," said Brendan, "before it gets crowded."

Leaving K9 to enjoy his through-the-window tour of southern Britain, Sarah Jane, Brendan and Aunt Lavinia made their way down rocking corridors to the night-train's restaurant car. They had soon seated themselves at a table and ordered from the menu. The food arrived soon afterwards and they began to dig in.



None of them noticed as an Indian gentleman, the one who had bumped into Brendan, came out of the kitchen area and stared over at their table, a slight smile playing on his lips. Satisfied with what he saw, the Indian moved along past their table and out of the carriage.

The other Indian waited for him in the corridor. "Who?" he said simply.

"The old woman, Lavinia Smith."

"And the others?"

The Indian smiled. "Later. The boy is next. I go now to prepare."

The Indian moved off along the corridor. His companion stared after him. "Yes, prepare," he said. "Prepare the revenge of Kanbo-Ala!"

Having finished their meal, Aunt Lavinia, Sarah Jane and Brendan walked back towards their compartments, all of them ready for a good night's sleep. It was getting late now, and most of their fellow passengers had already retired, leaving the train corridors deserted and quiet.

Brendan strolled up to his door. "Sarah Jane!" he gasped. "Aunt Lavinia!"

Worried by the tone in Brendan's voice, Sarah Jane and Aunt Lavinia moved up beside him.

Brendan was staring, goggle-eyed, at the doors to both their compartments, and with good reason. On each door was pinned a horrific looking doll, similar to those used in voodoo practices, with a small dagger embedded in its heart! And above them, scrawled in a red substance that looked uncomfortably like blood, was the message 'Death to defilers!'

Recovering from her initial shock, Sarah Jane pulled the daggers out of the dolls. The dolls dropped to the floor and she picked them up, examining them.

"What does it mean?" she said.

"Defilers?" said Brendan. "Defilers of what?"

Confused, her mind filling with questions, Sarah Jane turned to Aunt Lavinia. "Auntie," she said, "have you any idea . . ." Sarah Jane trailed off. Something seemed to be wrong with Aunt Lavinia. The old woman had stepped back against the corridor wall, supporting herself. Her legs were shaking. "Auntie, what is it?" asked Sarah Jane. "What's wrong?"

Aunt Lavinia's knees buckled and she fell to the floor. Sarah Jane leapt over to her. Aunt Lavinia's face was white, drained of blood. Her eyes were closing. "They've followed us . . ." she said weakly, ". . . followed us."

"Who?" said Sarah Jane, her voice taking on a note of urgency. "Auntie, what's the matter!"

"The curse . . ." Aunt Lavinia said, ". . . Kanbo-Ala . . . diary

. . . in danger . . . the sect . . .''

Sarah Jane looked up at Brendan. ''She's making no sense,'' she said, and turned back to the old woman. ''Auntie? Auntie?''

But it was no good. Aunt Lavinia's eyes had closed. Her head had dropped. She was unconscious.

''Curse?'' said Brendan. ''Dolls on our doors? Aunt Lavinia collapsing? Kanbo-whatever? Sarah Jane, what the devil is going on?!''

''I don't know,'' said Sarah Jane. ''But we've got to get some help. A doctor.'' She stood up and moved off down the corridor, ''Get her into the compartment!'' she shouted back, ''I'm going to find a guard!''

Brendan nodded and bent down to lift up Aunt Lavinia's still body. He did not see the two Indians staring at him from around a corner of the corridor. Both of them were smiling.

''The old woman will be dead by the morning,'' said one of them.

''The boy?''

''An accident.'' The Indian started to walk away. He turned, smiling. ''He will be dead within the half-hour!''

Brendan laid Aunt Lavinia on one of the sleeper compartment's beds and covered her with a blanket. The old woman's breathing was staggered. Brendan stepped back and turned to K9. ''K9,'' he said, ''does the phrase 'Kanbo-Ala' mean anything to you?''

''Negative,'' said K9.

Brendan sighed. ''Never mind, he said, ''I just thought . . .''

Brendan was interrupted by a knock on the door. He went to open it, expecting to see Sarah Jane. Instead, the Indian that he had bumped into on the platform stood smiling in at him.

''Excuse the disturbance,'' he said, ''but I meant to find you earlier. I believe you dropped this on the platform.'' The Indian produced Brendan's wallet.

Brendan felt his back pocket, and for the first time realised his wallet had been missing. ''I must have done,'' he said, reaching out for the wallet. ''Thank you for returning it.''

Suddenly the Indian grabbed Brendan's arm and twisted it up behind his back. Brendan howled in pain. ''Think nothing of it, defiler!'' spat the Indian.

Brendan just managed to scream ''K9!'' before the Indian clamped a hand over his mouth and dragged him, twisting and kicking, from the compartment.

Alerted, K9 started to move towards the corridor in pursuit, but the heavy wooden door of the compartment swung shut before him, blocking his way. ''Danger!'' barked K9. ''Danger!''

Brendan was half-dragged, half-carried along the deserted corridor. The Indian gasped with exertion and something that sounded almost like eager breathlessness. ''You are going to die!'' he kept saying to Brendan, ''You are going to die!''

At first, Brendan didn't realise what was going to happen to him, but then, slowly and horribly, the truth began to dawn. The Indian was taking him to one of the train doorways. He was going to throw him off the train! Brendan began to struggle desperately.

The Indian reached a doorway and, keeping Brendan locked in a painful neck-grip, placed his hand on the handle. Slowly, grinning sadistically at his young captive, he began to turn it. Suddenly, whipped by the wind, the door flew open, filling the corridor with noise from outside. Brendan screamed, but the sound was pulled away on the wind. The Indian started to push him down through the opening. Three feet below Brendan's head, tracks whizzed by at nightmarish speed. Brendan had never been more terrified in his life.

Suddenly, from down the corridor, came the sound of an explosion. From the corner of his eye, Brendan was dimly aware of seeing a compartment door being blown from its hinges, and of a squat, grey shape emerging through the resulting hole. The shape started to move towards them. K9! It was K9!

''Release Master Brendan,'' said K9 to the Indian, ''or I will fire.''

Brendan felt the Indian's hold loosen. Gasping, he sat up, his arms grabbing desperately for something to moor himself to before he tipped back out of the door. He found something: the Indian, now staring, terrified, at K9. Brendan clutched at the Indian's leg, and with a shocked yell of surprise the Indian overbalanced and fell through the open doorway. Looking back, Brendan saw him bouncing and rolling down an embankment, and then standing, shaking his fist at the speedily departing train! Within seconds, he had gone. Brendan stood up and pulled the door shut.

''That was close,'' he said. ''We'd better find Sarah Jane.''

''An ancient native sect!'' gasped Brendan, later, when he and K9 had rejoined Sarah Jane in the compartment. ''Dedicated to evil deeds.''

Sarah Jane nodded, intently studying the contents of her Uncle Africana's diary, the one which Aunt Lavinia had mentioned before her collapse. ''Apparently, one of the treasures that Aunt Lavinia was bequeathed belongs to them. Some kind of idol. They must want it back pretty desperately to follow it all the way from India.''

''And they'll stop at nothing to get it,'' observed Brendan. ''*That*,'' said Sarah Jane, ''is why you're leaving the train with Aunt Lavinia at the next station. The guard has arranged for an ambulance to take her to hospital from there.''

''I'm not leaving you alone on the train!'' objected Brendan. ''We don't know how many more sect members are aboard!''

''Exactly. Look, Brendan. They've already nearly killed you, and Aunt Lavinia is suffering from severe poisoning. I don't want there to be any more victims of the so-called 'curse of Kanbo-Ala'. Let K9 and me handle this our way.''

A guard poked his head in through the open doorway. "Miss Smith," he said, "we're pulling into the station. The ambulance is waiting."

"Thank you," said Sarah Jane. "Brendan will go with her."

"I'm *not* going!" shouted Brendan.

The train started to slow for approach to the station. Sarah Jane stood up. "Someone *has* to stay with Aunt Lavinia. You *are* going, Brendan, if I have to throw you off myself!"

The whine of the train's brakes sounded. Station lights appeared in the window. Soon, ambulance men carrying a stretcher entered the compartment. Brendan slumped and then nodded. "Be careful," he said, and helped the men out with Aunt Lavinia.

Once the train had started moving again, Sarah Jane and K9 made their way to the cargo car. Sarah Jane believed that by going there she could force whatever members of the sect were left into a final confrontation. She did not have long to wait before she was proven right. Secreting K9 and herself behind a packing case, she watched as a figure made its way along the shadowy corridor towards the car. "Only one, K9," she whispered.

The Indian moved into the cargo car and peered into the darkness. His head cocked from side-to-side as he listened for any sound which would give Sarah Jane and K9's postion away. Hearing nothing, he took what looked like a small tube from his pocket and lifted it towards his mouth. "Reveal yourself, defiler!" he bellowed. "Face the wrath of Kanbo-Ala!"

Sarah Jane tensed herself. She knew that what the Indian held in his hand was a native blow gun, probably containing a poison-tipped dart. She would have to time things very well if she didn't want to become a human pincushion! "K9," she whispered, "I'll draw his fire. When I do, stun him!" Taking a deep breath, she dived out from cover, somersaulting across the floor.

The Indian blew. A small dart

thudded into a packing case a few inches from Sarah Jane's head! The Indian quickly shoved another dart into the tube. "Now, K9!" shouted Sarah Jane, somersaulting once again to a new position.

K9 moved out from behind the packing case and targeted his blaster. Caught by surprise, the Indian blew a dart at K9. It bounced off his metal hide. K9 fired. His stun beam hit the Indian in the chest, flinging him back against some crates. They tipped from their perch, banging and crashing to the floor. The Indian joined them a second later, a pained and shocked expression on his face. "Defilers!" he hissed weakly, and then slumped.

Sarah Jane stood up and moved over to him, exhaling a deep sigh. "That was close," she said.

"Negative, Mistress," said K9. "Dart impacted at a distance of two point three centimetres from your cranium. No damage would have been caused at that distance."

Sarah Jane used two fingers to measure out two point three centimetres and placed them against her head. "Really, K9," she said sarcastically, "*that* much!" She started to walk out of the cargo car. "Next time," she added, "I think we'll take the bus!"

Ghostly GOINGS ON

Do you believe in ghosts? The answer to that question often depends on whether you've had any 'spooky' experiences yourself. Certainly the people involved in these strange events would answer a definite 'yes'.

THE DEADLY SPECTRE

An innocent-looking house in Berkeley Square in London was once the scene of some bizarre and terrifying events. We do not know exactly when the events began, but one of the earliest victims was Sir Robert Warboys, in the 19th century.

Sir Robert had accepted a challenge from friends to spend a night in the notorious house, and he retired to the room which was thought to be haunted. He was armed with a gun, and there was a pull cord in the room, which would ring a warning bell in the room below if he needed assistance.

His waiting friends below heard the frantic jingling of the bell at 45 minutes past midnight. They raced upstairs, hearing a shot ring out as they ran. They burst into the room, and were appalled to find Sir Robert dead. His staring eyes and clenched teeth revealed the cause of his death: sheer fright.

The house stood empty for years, and on one occasion two sailors looking for overnight accommodation thought that they would take advantage of its emptiness. One of the men soon fell asleep in a bedroom, but the other man was restless. He heard footsteps, and woke his friend. The two men watched the door, horrified, as a dark shape entered the room.

Worse, it attacked them, and pinned one against the wall, while the other managed to make an escape. He staggered out into the road and blurted out his story to a passing policeman, who went back with him into the house.

They found the body of the other sailor on the basement stairs, and the terrified expression on his face spoke of the terror which had gone before.

Other victims of the house included a girl guest who went mad with terror, and a maid who died in hospital, after being found in a crumpled heap, muttering, "Don't let it touch me."

Over the years, though, the dreadful events ceased, and the house is now a bookshop, where no strange or sinister events are recorded. If only one of those tragic victims of the apparition could have lived to tell the tale . . .

GROUNDED BY A GHOST

Some ghosts are thought by believers to appear at times when those people who were close to them are in danger. This seems to have been the case when an aircraft belonging to one of the biggest airlines in the world was suddenly grounded by its crew.

The crew insisted that they had seen the ghosts of the Captain and Flight Engineer of a Lockheed TriStar aircraft, which crashed into the Florida Everglades in 1972, claiming 101 lives.

For some time afterwards the ghosts were seen by stewardesses and flight crew, and they always seemed in some way to be giving warnings of danger. Those closely involved believe that their intention was always to warn others of imminent danger in the airline's aircraft, and appearances were taken seriously enough to cause the grounding, and stringent safety checks.

Then, as suddenly as they had started, the appearances ceased, in 1974.

THE PHANTOM BUS

Stories of ghostly apparitions doing harm or even killing people are fortunately rare, but another well-documented case from the 1930s seems to suggest that misfortune can result from encounters with supernatural phenomena.

In this case though, the apparition didn't take anything like human form. No, it was a phantom bus.

The bus, which was a number 7, was seen by several witnesses, racing round the Ladbroke Grove area of London in the early hours of one morning in 1936. It was a strange enough case in itself, but it hit the public attention more especially because of the tragic accident it caused, when a driver swerving to avoid it crashed into a wall and was killed.

The story of the bus was told in the coroner's court, when witnesses described it as being ablaze with lights. It had vanished, they said, as soon as the car hit the wall. A bus inspector gave evidence that he too had seen it, as it pulled into his depot, but again it had simply vanished.

No satisfactory explanation has ever been put forward.

CURIOUS EVENTS AT COVENT GARDEN

In December 1897 an actor named William Terriss was stabbed to death outside the Adelphi Theatre in Covent Garden, after he had played the lead in a thriller being performed there. Many people believe that he still haunts not only the theatre, but also the nearby Covent Garden underground station.

At the theatre, strange tappings and footsteps have been heard, lights switch on and off, and mechanical lifts have moved, apparently on their own. In 1928 an actress was surprised by a couch moving in her dressing room – which had been Terriss's – and something seizing her arm. She had not known of the ghost story before she appeared at the theatre.

But then in 1955 events took a different turn when a ticket collector at Covent Garden tube station saw a tall, distinguished-looking man, dressed in grey, with white gloves. The ticket collector spoke to the man, but he immediately disappeared. Later he saw a picture of William Terriss, and was so frightened that he asked for a transfer.

Other staff at the station have spoken of a strange presence there, and there have been further reports of sightings of the man dressed in grey.

BBC tv

K-9

If you've enjoyed this Annual, why not look out for our Dr. Who Annual? It's on sale now.

World

SBN 7235 6661 5